

The  
Strength  
*To*  
Yield

VIRGILIA BOGUE



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THE STRENGTH TO YIELD









# THE STRENGTH TO YIELD

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF A GREAT  
TEMPTATION

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BY VIRGILIA BOGUE

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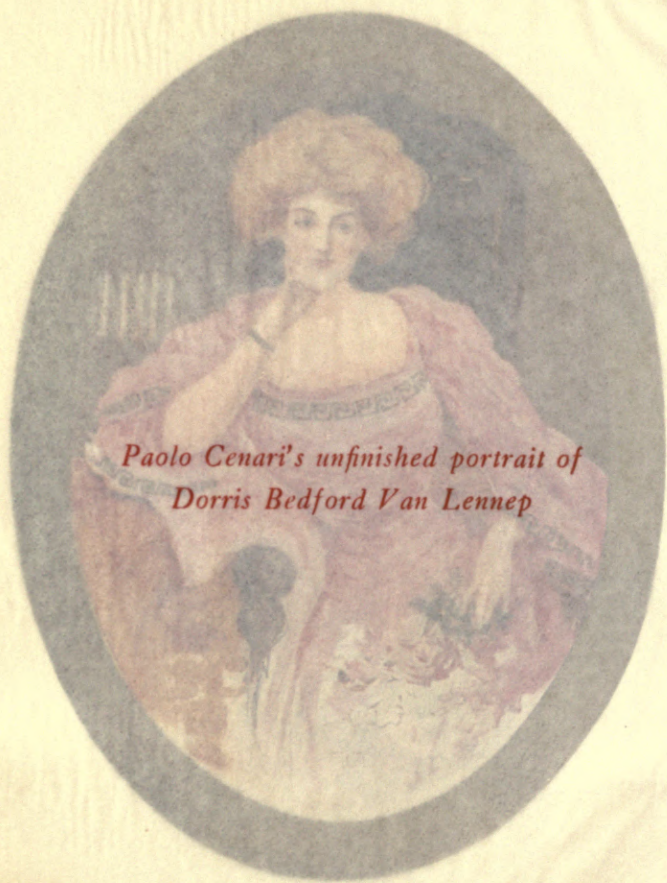
Doniz B. Hoffmann's portrait of  
Paolo Cennini's unfinished portrait of



CUNNINGHAM, CURTISS & WELCH  
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MCMIX





*Paolo Cenari's unfinished portrait of  
Dorris Bedford Van Lennep*



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TO VENICE—  
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## CHAPTER I.

Ah! Surely once some urn of Attic clay  
Held thy wan dust, and thou hast come again  
Back to this common world so dull and vain,  
For thou wert weary of the sunless day,  
The heavy fields of scentless asphodel,  
The loveless lips with which men kiss in Hell.  
—*Phêdre.*

The old temple loomed up before them, opalescent in the sunset in its wealth of Pentelicon marble. From far, far away, perhaps beyond Mount Hymettus, or some field of asphodel or poppy, came the bleating of sheep.

"Oh," said Dorris, as she climbed the high steps, "oh, to be free, free! To be a dryad in the Arcadian age, with all of forest liberty and never a rite or law. Can't you hear the piping of some goat-foot Pan as he sings to the wood-nymphs? Listen—the sheep!"

She dropped parasol and gloves and stretched a slender white arm toward the red-purple glow of the sunset and the delicate pinks and blues of the Cyclops, and cried,—

"Descending fast the mountain shadows kiss  
Thy glorious gulf, unconquered Salamis."

"Mrs. Van Lennep, you always have an apt quotation. I confess this time I know its author, and will gamble I even know the canto it appears in," and the Honourable Roland Barker sat down on the lower step of the Parthenon in servile attitude, his eyes on the vision in pink with its Rossetti head thrown back in a flute of the stately Doric column.



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She looked down upon him in mock condescension.

"Now, Mr. Barker, I know what you are going to tell me. Mr. Rossetti would have loved to paint me as I stand here at the very end column of Athena's tower, with my head a veritable shower of gold, and my eyes as blue as the Ægean, my slenderness accentuated by the severe flowing lines of my dress as delicately pink as the faint light on the Arcopagus. And, pray, what would Mr. Rossetti have named the picture?"

Dorris laughed.

He reflected a moment, gazing into the searching blue depths of her eyes.

"He would have called it 'First of Studies in Shadows.'"

"And what would the second have been?"

"Ah—I would have left the choice to Mr. Rossetti."

"Mr. Barker, you are not clever. I gave you a chance to be epigrammatic. You have made a most commonplace remark."

"What a fortunate thing I have a sense of humour," he laughed.

"But the Acropolis at sunset is no place for the commonplace. Don't quibble, and I won't; for to me this temple is more sacred than St. Peter's and far more awe-inspiring. I wonder if it's its sheer beauty, but I think not altogether, for at this hour I seem to remember. I can almost fancy I lived here once long ago; it may be the mere recollection of a *Tadema*, a novel or poem here or there—but think, just think! Women must have watched the battle of Salamis from this very porch—See! see! there are the ships, and there the long walls to the Piræus. All is still as now!—and around us are the



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shades of Ionian women watching intently in their soft robes. The temple is whole again. Within," her voice softening, "many are kneeling before the chryselephantine statue of Athena, praying for fathers and lovers. The voluptuous scent of incense reaches us here, and we are seeing one of the greatest battles of time to the setting of the sun and the bright Levantine skies. Did Salamis take place at sunset?"

"What a very banal remark! Go on dreaming," was his response.

The air and earth seemed hushed forever—then a great boom announced the departure of the sun this glorious April day.

Henry Van Lennep and the Norths were climbing the high steps of the Parthenon.

"Oh, there you are, Dorris! Good girl!—and Barker! I'm so glad you're not alone. We must hurry. The Propylæa will close at once. Look! They're all descending the steps. You know, Mr. Barker, I thought my wife might not even hear the warning bang that nearly popped my ears off, and I thought she'd be perverse enough to leave you, to muse by herself about Byron's eyes or Keats's curls or some such rot, and I didn't want her to be caged here for the night. Hey! Dorris, how would that have been?"

"My good Mr. Van Lennep," interposed Barker, "you mistake Mrs. Van Lennep's attitude toward me. Had I been young, she might have fled; but being old, she has had a true youthful pity for me, and we have had a most sensible argument. Mrs. Van Lennep told me the opinion of one of my favorite writers, that the appreciation of a sunset—no matter in what country—denoted the pro-

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vincial temperament. I said, according to that, I was a resident of Hammersmith."

"I say the same," remarked the saucy Grace North.

"I am urban—distinctly urban, then," resumed Van Lennep, "and have a suburban wife. The trouble here is, one really doesn't breathe fresh air. The eternal perfume in it is too funereal. It is a funeral of the entire place—dead, rotten, decaying."

Dorris smiled. They had left the Acropolis. Barker looked straight ahead as he picked his way down the short cut to the main road.

"That is what makes it so wonderful," sighed the former, "the roses are so perfumed. There has always been this same fragrance in the Eastern twilights; even Italian ones would seem trite after them. It adds to the divine beauty of it all. It is like going into the cathedral of Granada and breathing its faint incense after a teeming rain in the town, to come to this tragic land from the bustle of others. For my part, I think I love it better now than I would have in its Golden Age, when it was a boast and show."

"I never thought you affected quite such an artistic pose, Dorris. Really, it seems almost natural. I hope it goes out of date soon, however, for I am either not clever enough to do justice to it or else too clever to attempt," laughed her husband.

Grace North, following—her arm linked in her mother's as they walked slowly down the broad avenue—was wondering why she had married him. She watched the tall, slender creature before her and her graceful movements. Yes, why had she married him—was it money? But perhaps it had been a love-match. "Well,

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each to her own taste." She felt there was a mystery about Dorris Van Lennep; at least, that impression had been conveyed to her by the girl's every word and look. It was a strange thing that so old a man as the Honourable Mr. Roland Barker evinced so deep an interest in her. Was her personality so marked that it gave the suggestion of the vampire? At all events her own phlegmatic temperament felt drawn towards that of the other woman on entering a room.

But the trend of her thought suddenly changed. The little party had arrived at the Place de la Constitution. The band in the park was playing a merry tune and hundreds of loiterers had met before the Royal Palace to discuss over the tables their liqueurs and the day's rehearsal for the sports at the Stadium. It was a gala time for Greece. Carriages passed to and fro, and daintily gowned women alighted at the various hotels in the Place.

Grace overheard Mr. Barker say to Mrs. Van Lennep when they had paused to make their adieux, "Then good-night. If you wish to prove your allegiance to Byron, be ready to go to 'Sunium's marbled steep' to-morrow at nine. I have an excellent guide and the trip is comparatively easy, I am told. Well, Mr. Van Lennep, what do you think of my scheme?"

"Thank you," he replied. "My interest in the coming Olympic games is greater than that I have for cut-and-dried temples of archaic origin. Good swimming practiced to-morrow, you know, followed by running in the Stadium in the afternoon. If you have a good guide, however, I shall let Dorris have the privilege of being escorted by you, provided she is here by six sharp."



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"Thank you. I am sorry you will not join us. We shall be back by that time. What a night, Mrs. Van Lennep—and Venus is the evening star! It is for all the world like the Vale of Cashmere."

Dorris said good-night, and left Mr. Barker and the Norths to go to their hotel, while she walked with her husband across the Place to the Hotel de la Grande Bretagne. As they passed through the corridor her husband fancied too many heads turned and that he heard a voice repeat:

*"Mon Dieu! Quelle belle femme."*

He eyed his wife's beauty jealously a few minutes later as she arranged some crimson flowers in a bowl, which bore the card, "Comte Henri de Gismond," — saying hotly, "Dirty cads, foreigners—whole crowd! Damned dirty cads."

Dorris bent her head over the Greek roses, inhaling their sweetness, and smiled.



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### CHAPTER II.

I from the City of the Violet Crown  
Have watched the sun by Corinth's hill go down,  
And marked the "myriad laughter" of the sea  
From starlit hills of flower-starred Arcady.

—*Ravenna.*

TO MRS. THEODORE GUNTER,  
White Villa, Back Bay Station, Brookline, Mass.

FROM MRS. HENRY VAN LENNEP.

HOTEL DE LA GRANDE BRETAGNE,  
ATHENS, Easter Sunday, 1906.

*Dearest Cordelia,*

By now, no doubt, you have either become conjectural about my recent matrimonial bond, or else have decided that I am having such a good time that I have already forgotten your dear advice and dearer talks. If you have been conjectural at all, your surmises have doubtless been correct; but as years ago, at school I remember when asking for money that I always waited till the end of my letter, and Daddy would forgive—now I am going to postpone all disagreeables until the end of this letter. Don't turn to the last page! All in good time—and I am writing you a long, long letter.

It is so refreshing to know I have one real friend in the world who will understand and sympathize.

To-day has been the red-letter day of my life. With the Honourable Mr. Roland Barker and a charming dragoon, Alexander, I went to that most awe-inspiring and won-

derful spot, Sunium, a real Arcady in this Arcadian land! He is an Englishman of some sixty years, perhaps, of the best class—a *littérateur*, a man of the world, an artist and a scholar, not omitting his keen sense of humour and sublime understanding. We had a day, Cordelia, that I shall never forget. And the tragic part of it all seems to me to be in the fact that the Honourable Roland Barker is an old man and a married one, and that I am a young woman and a married one. Had I been able to find such a man of younger years, ours would have been the *grande passion* of history. As it is, Mr. Barker is far younger than Harry. Harry never was young or never will be—whether he be seven-and-twenty or seven-and-seventy, and I shall pique your patriotism by saying that he is the personification of the commercialism of our commercial country. But we'll leave that for later on, for I know you are a good American, and, besides that, wish to feel that I am happy.

So for my Easter Sunday of dreams! We took the train to Laurium, the old silver mine of that beauty-loving cult commonly called the Ancient Greeks, and all our trip seemed to be a mass of green meadows, olive groves, and poppy-covered fields, with a stately cypress now and then standing erect and solitary in its tall slenderness. To me the cypress is the emblem and symbol of Greece, for it is so beautiful, sad, and wholly appropriate.

At Laurium a carriage and pair awaited us, and after Alexander had climbed up by the driver, and Mr. Barker and I were seated, the horses began at a good trot the drive to the Temple of Neptune. I confess I was a little disappointed at this stage, owing to the barren green of the surrounding country, but Mr. Barker kept me interested until we came in sight of our temple.

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The approach cannot possibly give one an idea of its real beauty, for all one can see before one is really standing in the temple is a hill, mounted by thirteen Doric columns of Parian marble that to this day are as white as the note-paper on which I am writing. It is very wonderful how the marble from Paros retains its pure shade, for Cape Colonna is the most exposed portion of Greece, and subject to disastrous storms (you may casually remember Falconer's shipwreck), while the Pentelicon marble, used in all the Athenian temples, has, as you know, darkened and shown the effects of the ages.

To gain access to the temple one must leave horses behind and ascend a rather rocky hill, the height of which is inconceivable, until one is upon the temple. And, then, oh, Cordelia! in your forty years of life as a citizeness of the world you have never, I know, beheld such a sight as that which was before us.

I will not attempt to describe in detail that spot at sight of which so many honeyed lyres have broken into music and so many golden pens have written immortal song. At the cape of a peninsula and on a high precipice projecting into the sea stands the lofty white temple, made whiter by the green grass and blue skies and waters which veritably outshine sapphires!

On the horizon-line are a string of Greek isles overlapping one another, each fainter and fainter until Melos, the last, is hardly visible; and immediately over the cape is the Island of St. George. One looks down into the crystalline waters made clearer by the white sand.

To-day there was not a cloud in the sky, which was an inverted bowl of blue. After mute astonishment, speechless joy, then spellbound enthusiasm, I suddenly



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heard Mr. Barker's voice repeating the old, familiar lines,—

“Fair clime, where every season smiles  
Benignant o'er those blessed isles,  
Which, seen from far Colonna's height  
Makes glad the heart that hails the sight,  
And lends to loneliness delight,  
There, mildly dimpling ocean's cheek,  
Reflects the tint of many a peak  
Caught by the laughing tides that lave  
These Edens of the Eastern wave;  
Far from the winters of the West  
By every breeze and season blest.”

And so, Cordelia, how can I attempt to say more after the opening lines of the “Giaour?”

Alexander spread a cloth over the lower step on the shaded side of the temple, and there we talked and laughed and ate; also, we really did have a bottle of Samian wine.

Mr. Barker, always tactful, drew me out imperceptibly. He inquired a bit about my life, and I found myself confidentially talking about Daddy's death, my friends, etc., and particularly you. I told him how you had prevented my marrying months before I finally did, and had given me good advice about Harry Van Lennep; of the hatefulness of Aunt Minnie, and of the trials of living with her. And when I had told him much, he said:

“And your wonderful sense of beauty, by what was it inspired? What is your talent? You surely express it in some way.”

“I only wish I could, Mr. Barker,” I replied. “I draw a little, write a little, sing a little—and read and dream a great deal!”

“Ah, an artist, a *savante*, and a *chanteuse*—and so young!”

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(You see, Cordelia, I thought I might as well tell him my real age.) He expressed no surprise, but made me promise to stop my dreaming, not to encourage the various æsthetic tendencies in my nature, for they could only lead to failure—never to happiness.

At this I told him the things I cared for most were the beautiful ones; that beauty was my only religion; that I loathed the commonplace. And Mr. Barker then told me that it was only the commonplace that made great beauty in any line possible.

We had a heated argument, after which he suggested my referring the topic to you, which I am doing. He said the beauty of life was brought about only by simple things, and, oh, Cordelia! I know it is only his tactful way of veiling the fact that by simple things he meant love—and he knows I don't love Harry.

"But, Mr. Barker," I broke out without second thought, "I had to marry sooner or later. My life with my aunt was intolerable. Harry I liked more than any of the rest. Besides, with my ideas, *the one* does not exist. I should never love anybody, I know."

"The interest I have in you you may one day understand—perhaps, never, but it is well founded. Don't you see, Mrs. Van Lennep, your husband is incapable of living in your world, but you are capable of living in his? You have something of the Italian, of the Renaissance in you, with a mad thirst for freedom and beauty, and no thought or care for the real, practical needs of life. But you have brains and an amount of adaptability. He is typical of modernity—a man of good family, with little cultivation, but much love for you. Every day and every hour that you keep on developing and expanding according to your

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nature you will find life harder to endure, and you and your husband will drift further apart. There will be nothing left but—calamity!

"It is to tell you this that I have brought you here to-day. For I have seen women's lives ruined, and I want to spare yours. I have not known you long, but I think, perhaps, I know you better than Mrs. Gunter. You are young, beautiful, and—may I not say, a little selfish, with a kind heart and a brilliant mind. Don't you see if you were to bring yourself down to your husband's level, as it were, interest yourself more in his life and line of thought, it would be better for you both? Then you will, yourself, develop in another line—that of self-knowledge.

"It is hard for a girl like you to listen to an old man, harder still to understand my reason to dare to speak to you so. I know you don't understand, but I do. Had you waited long enough, doubtless your life would have been led to suit your own tastes. But you have not chosen it so. Now that you are Mrs. Van Lennep, lead your life as Mrs. Van Lennep should. Do you understand?"

At first I could have killed the Honourable Roland Barker there on the steps, but I realized the truth in everything he told me, and that word "calamity" hurt. It shall never be that, Cordelia—never, never!

Driving back, he told me gently that many men in the world might take advantage of me by clever parrying or absolute lies, and he asked me to try to take his advice.

And so to-night I have been puzzled—and worried. Being human, I have been foolish enough to let the conversation annoy me, and feel terribly the truth of Mr. Barker's words. I know he considers me a child, yet I cannot understand his interest. What is it?



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He spoke of a portrait-painter who has been in Boston. He wants to have him paint my portrait. He is quite celebrated, I believe. This is apropos of nothing, only it happens to be the artist you told me of. I have forgotten his name, but remember you said he was charming.

I feel to-night, *chérie*, the need of some one I love near me. I wish you were here. Poor Harry! If I could only grow fond of him.

Always much love,  
DORRIS.

P. S.—I forgot completely that the Olympic games open a week from to-morrow, or, rather from to-day, it being 2 A. M. The king and queen of England are coming on for them. They will be very interesting and they are to take place in the beautiful new Stadium.

D. V. L.

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### CHAPTER III.

Men with their heads reflect on this and that—  
But women with their hearts on Heaven knows what.  
—*Don Juan.*

Grace North and Dorris Van Lennep were walking their horses down the Mount Lycabettus road. The midday glare was becoming intolerable, and both wished themselves in their respective rooms.

"Mrs. Van Lennep, what are you going to do on leaving Athens?" repeated Grace for the third time.

"Ah, excuse me. That is a point on which we are unsettled. I forgot to tell you Harry got a cable to-day from his mother. His father is ill, and incapable of managing his business affairs. Of course he looks to his son for help."

"Then it means America?"

"Not for me, I hope, though Harry will be obliged to go. He is securing passage to-day, I believe," and Dorris lapsed into silence again.

Grace found it quite impossible to see her features under her heavy green veil, and divining that the other woman was in a mood, she did not chatter. They continued down the winding road, and the only sound was an occasional stumble of Mrs. Van Lennep's horse. Each time she used a tighter rein, and Grace thought she looked worried.

At last Dorris smiled, and said, "Fancy a country like this having such a noon! My eyes are burning. I cannot stand the glare, can you?"

"Oh, I am used to it, you see. I know the tropics so well."

Dorris having heard this remark some twenty times, answered rather sharply, "This is not the tropics. Are you going to the Legation to-night?"

"What Legation? Nothing at the American, I know."

"Oh, English, of course, of course."

Silence, in which Dorris wondered if she could spend the remainder of spring and all the summer with the Norths. She realized the stupidity of her manner toward Grace, but there was something in the girl's make-up that antagonized her.

"Grace—if I may take the liberty to call you that—I don't mean to be irritable. Blame it on the glare. Do you think you and your mother could endure my society until Harry returns?"

Grace laughed.

"We might try. We're off for Venice by the Austrian-Lloyd to Trieste the day before the Marathon race. We will be unable to get in all the games. But every day for eight days or so will be enough. By the way, let's trot a little. Stadium exercises are at two, and we must not be late. We are almost on a level now. Really, Mrs. Van Lennep, as a matter of fact, I should love to have you with us. From a purely selfish point of view, you would be a jolly comrade for me, and I could do so much more with a young married woman along. You would chaperon, you know, when mother was tired."

"The rôle of chaperon is unknown to me. As a matter of fact, Miss North, I am younger than you."

"Really! How strange!"

"Very!"



If the Honourable Roland Barker had heard the rest of the conversation his very flattering opinion of Mrs. Van Lennep might have been revised.

When the young ladies arrived at the Grande Bretagne, they found Count Gismond and Harry Van Lennep dancing attendance. Harry dismounted his wife and remarked quite gaily:

"Well, little girl, had a good ride in this hot hole? Passage on the *Romanic* from Naples on Monday—week from to-day. I'll be really glad to get away."

"Oh, Mr. Van Lennep, Mrs. Van Lennep has promised she'd come to Venice with us. Can't you arrange it, and come over yourself later in the season?" put in Grace North.

"Child, alive! I should miss her far too much. What do you say, Dorris?"

His wife made no reply, but looked bored. Miss North and her escort bade them good morning, and walked over to the Hotel d'Angleterre.

Dorris, her head high, her crop under her arm, led the way to their sitting-room. She closed the door after them and locked it, looking steadily at Harry. Lifting her veil she said quite calmly:

"Harry, I am not going to America with you."

"Come, little girl, you can't threaten or bully me," and Harry seized his wife by the wrists and laughed. "Kiss me, girlie."

He raised her head and kissed her.

"I'd let you stay, but I'd miss you so."

Dorris struggled, picked up her crop, and shouted, "I said I was not returning with you. I meant it!" and she lashed her whip through the air.

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"Well, what does the romantic Dorris plan doing? Something interesting, eh? Doesn't she look handsome in a temper? She thinks she can bully me into letting her stay. She can stay—but no bank account on me—no letter of credit or that sort of thing." Harry laughed.

"Don't be so dull, Harry," she started to explain, "the ten thousand Daddy left on my birthday so long ago,—it would be very easy to get hold of. As for the rest of my money that I do not come into until next year, with legal aid I might easily get the interest of it which Aunt Minnie has been so kind as to usurp. I could go to Africa, Budapest, London, or wheresoever my fancy dictated. You are the under-dog, Harry, and you must bark."

"It's a great pity," he retorted, "that your father was a millionaire. If you had had nothing left you, you would have been the under-dog, and you wouldn't even have barked." He walked slowly over to the window opening on the terrace and stepped out.

Dorris followed him.

"You had better dress, Dorry," he said, "the Place is already full of people. Do look at the carriages! I must say there are some rather smart women in town. But possibly you do not wish to go to the Stadium on this fine opening day of the Olympic games. Perhaps you do not wish to see King Edward march across the horse-shoe, for you would have to rise when the band struck up, 'God Save the King!' It might humiliate you to rise for royalty. Your dignity is such that it would be offended. So you are going to stay alone in Europe? The gossips in Boston will have much food for talk. I think the Norths would be rather edifying companions for you.

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You know if it's such a simple matter to procure a letter on the various stocks and bonds you hold, you can do so. I will concede coming over again as soon as father picks up. You have won the game. Victory is yours."

Through Dorris's mind flashed the memory of her own father's illness and death and the greatest and only grief she had known. She walked over to her husband and touched his sleeve.

"Dear, I hope—I hope—he gets well. I do. I do!" Her own aching memory had evolved sympathy for the sorrow that threatened him. Likewise the memory brought on a paroxysm of sobs as Harry held her close. "Don't leave me, Harry, please," she breathed.

Her husband, moved beyond words, kissed her wet eyes. After a bit she became calm, and he carried her to a chair.

"Don't worry, girl. It is not so serious," he assured her. "Stay with the Norths. It's all right. I was a selfish brute, but you do things queerly, dear. You never coax. Come, I'll send up for Susan. Primp, and be pretty to-day."

Many, many times through long days and sleepless nights she was fated to curse her husband for his submission. At such times, we do not see,—we cannot; and the thing inconsequential which occasionally makes history, that ruins the lives of men and women—in itself trivial—had come to Dorris Van Lennep.

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It was a lively throng that met on the terrace of the Grande Bretagne, and Mrs. Harry Van Lennep seemed the happiest one in it. She was at least the prettiest in



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her inevitable shade of pink. At any rate, Count Gismond, the Honourable Roland Barker, and Porter Freeman did not find time to look from her to Miss North who was charming in her smart white serge.

Dorris had a chance before they stepped into their carriages, however, to take Grace by the arm and whisper, "I'm going to stay," and when the young girl looked up at her, she absently turned away.

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### CHAPTER IV.

And Circumstance, that unspiritual god  
And miscreator, makes and helps along  
Our coming evils with a crutch-like rod,  
Whose touch turns Hope to dust—  
the dust we all have trod!

—Byron.

"A gala night, indeed! And in the City of the Violet Crown. Count Gismond, do look at that huge electric bulb over the gate, and this mob. Such a thing should not be permitted. Just fancy! a reception on the Acropolis!"

The little party had left carriages and were climbing toward the Propylæa.

It was a warm, starlit night, and on the way to the ball at the British Legation, most of the world was taking in the display on the Acropolis which had been arranged by the Minister of Affairs. The Parthenon was illuminated by pink, blue, and white lights which outlined its Phidian grandeur in the black night.

There was a dense throng within the Propylæa, and as the little party in which Dorris found herself had difficulty in keeping together, Mr. Barker suggested the terrace as a meeting place.

Mrs. North and her daughter were in a group with Mr. Porter Freeman and another English acquaintance, and were followed closely by Mr. Barker and Harry Van Lennep. Dorris with Count Gismond, apparently had some trouble in keeping up with the others, catching only an occasional glimpse of Mr. Barker's white hair or the pink rose in Grace's brown tresses in the crowd on the

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steps above. At the top of the staircase, Dorris turned to Gismond.

"Breathing space at last," she said. "M. de Gismond, let us go to the Parthenon. This crowd is insufferable."

The words had scarcely escaped her when they both started at the music of a brass band in a popular air. Dorris looked annoyed, and Gismond nodded understandingly.

"Yes, they are desecrating the Parthenon. It is there, and we might as well take it in."

They picked their way among the loose marble stones, and Gismond almost lifted Dorris off her feet, helping her up the high steps of Athena's temple. It was too true; there was a brass band in the sacred edifice, and not alone that, either. Long tables in rows were arranged as if for supper, and they heard the popping of corks and many a light jest. Dorris felt the sacrilege, and turned upon Gismond as if to accuse him.

"I simply cannot bear this," she said irritably, "can't we find the others?"

"Yes, on the terrace," was his answer, "but the crowd is too great at present to get there with any degree of comfort. Shall we try the Erechtheum?"

"Anything at all, so we get out of the sound of that noise. They'll be playing 'Yankee Doodle' next."

So they threaded their way across the Acropolis. This other temple was, indeed, deserted, her caryatides standing out like threatening sentinels in the gloom. In a moment Dorris had descended the steps and taken a seat upon the ledge overlooking Athens. Below, they could see the coming and going of the crowds, while occasional lights flashed on the north end of the Parthenon.



"Strange that this temple shouldn't be visited by some one besides ourselves," mused Dorris. "But Beauty doesn't always mind the indifference of the multitude."

"We-ll," he responded, "Beauty doesn't *have* to mind, and the temple—ah! it is made more beautiful by that which is within it—the golden hair and red lips of Mrs. Van Lennep."

Count Gismond crept a little nearer in the darkness.

"M. de Gismond, that remark was superfluous. Take me to the terrace immediately."

"Ah, the American has as much of the coquette in her as the woman of France," he said, smiling.

This time Gismond's attitude was unmistakable, and Dorris rose to be confronted by him.

"Find my husband at once, I say!"

"This is no time to look for husbands. What wonderful lips yours are, Mrs. Van Lennep, even in this light"—

A figure was silhouetted on the marble above, and Dorris caught the flicker of a cigarette. Confident, now, of safety, she cried:—

"You are not to speak to me so, do you hear?"

The shadow on the marble shifted. In another moment, Mr. Barker was offering her his arm.

"M. de Gismond," he said, "you will go directly to the terrace and tell Mr. Van Lennep that Mrs. Van Lennep and I are on our way to the British Legation."

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When Mr. Barker came for his dance he found Dorris talking to Prince Constantine. She was seated by the fountain in the rose-garden—a vision of white and gold. He awaited his opportunity, and when she was alone came forward and bowed.

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## *The Strength to Yield*

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"Has my wild rose been cultivated yet?" he asked.

"No. Perhaps, after all, she doesn't stand transplantation as well as she promised to. The wild rose fades so fast."

"Her day is short," he agreed, "she is soon like her mother."

"But what a tragedy that a man never becomes like his mother. Am I not quoting one of your favorite epigrams?" she smiled.

"Not exactly, Mrs. Van Lennep, you have spoiled it. In the first place, you are speaking of men and women; I am talking of roses."

"How ineffably charming you are, Mr. Barker. I am going to cut two dances just to hear you talk."

"An idle pastime for so young a girl."

"Really, Mr. Barker, you are the first human being who has ever made me hate myself. Even Cordelia couldn't do it. I had the same feeling—reversed—when I read 'Dorian Grey.' It made me hate people; now I hate myself. I wish I had a mother to tell it to. I have no one but Cordelia. I thought at first I'd hate you as much as I hated 'Dorian Grey' when I realized its power over me."

"Hm! 'The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it.' Is that what troubled you?"

"Well, you see, the only real temptation I ever did have was to marry Harry Van Lennep. I yielded."

Both laughed.

"It's a bad philosophy for children."

"How I wish you were young, Mr. Barker."

"Why? Were I young, I should love you. As it is, you make an old man young."

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## *The Strength to Yield*

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"Then, if I make an old man young I presume you will be really telling me in a minute that you do love me."

"Come, let's be serious. What are your plans?"

"Harry leaves to-morrow for Naples to catch the White Star boat. His father is confined to his bed. His health has been abominable for some time."

"Why aren't you going with him?" demanded Barker.

"I didn't want to."

"Ah, you told me the real reason without any parrying. But haven't you had your first lesson?"

Barker studied Dorris for a time. She lifted her rose to her lips, and her gaze wandered off toward the house. She had no wish to be reminded of Gismond, and retorted:

"Why don't people stroll here? They all seem to be in the court, or dancing. How very stupid of them!"

"Where are you going, and with whom are you to stay?"

"With the Norths. Going to Venice. I am so glad! I do love it so. Oh, I do. Don't you?"

"I am going, too," said Barker, who previously had had no such intention. "I am going to try to save the golden Mrs. Van Lennep from such experiences as that of to-night."

"Sometimes I wonder why I don't get angry with you at your touch of familiarity."

"Because it comes in such a grand-daddy way, and I am such an ancient and harmless individual myself. You will stop"—

"In Venice? Oh, Danieli's always, never anywhere else, of course."

"Strange," he mused, "you used the same gestures and the very same words that my friend, the painter of whom



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## *The Strength to Yield*

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I told you once, did. The repetition of a mannerism or peculiar phrase suggesting another personality than the one who uses it is among psychological oddities. But we must not discuss telepathy and kindred subjects. Why are you not spending your last night entirely with your husband? I really shouldn't think he'd stand it. He's probably jolly well worried by now."

"Mr. Barker," she said, evading his question, "I have told you so much about my life. You have divulged nothing of your own. Will you promise to?"

"Oh, age is forever dreaming over imaginary episodes of long ago."

"Is youth worth its price?"

"If you call the price getting old? Well, youth is the oldest thing in the world. Sit where you are and I will send your husband to you."

Dorris welcomed her husband's hands as they went out to her. She thought of weeks, of months, without his protection. He was kind,—so kind! She nestled against his shoulder, and there they sat together in the pale starlight, while the marble fountain played, Dorris in her white and gold, her radiant head against his black coat, and her slender arms about his neck. In the garden was the scent of a hundred roses whose language in every clime is Love.

As Mr. Barker wandered there for a smoke an hour later, he was gratified at what he saw.

"But then," he reflected, "I have seen the *real* presentiment. This is only a *tableau*."

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## *The Strength to Yield*

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### CHAPTER V.

For thy life has been the history of a flower in the air,  
Liable but to breezes and to time;  
As rich and purposeless as is the rose,  
Thy simple doom is to be beautiful.

—*Marpessa.*

The sun was drinking the lingering drops of dew from blade and poppy, and the soft cool air gave promise of another perfect day. The Zappieon Gardens were green and fragrant, enjoying the rosy dawn and its silent wonder. The Olympieum looked younger and more intact, its ornate Corinthian beauty challenging the more stately and less decadent edifices on the Sacred Hill. At least so Dorris thought as she sat by Harry's side awed by the beauty of the sunrise.

"Harry, tell me," she said sweetly, "can't you feel the wonder of this April morning? the youth, the beauty of it? For centuries, Harry, there have been these same spring sunrises with their hope of beautiful days. Think of the tragedies and farces, and battles and work, and secrets many a rosy morning like this has been sole witness of; and think, too, of the cruelty of spring, ever young and ardent! It still woos the country, but Greece is dead. Still the sun ripens the roses in these gardens and brings the trees to a deeper green, just as it did twenty-five centuries ago, but it changes the color of that marble." She looked toward the Olympieum,—“And it watches us grow old. Yet, spring, it has eternal beauty,—it is always young. I can't explain my meaning, Harry, but why do things inanimate live while we must die?”

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"Ah, Dorris, what a cheerful topic! And on the very day I am leaving. As for me, the universe with its marvels and atrocities—well, it has never given me sufficient worry, to think about intensely. It makes one morbid, really, don't you think so?"

Dorris did not reply. There was a long silence, broken at last by a lark. Goat-bells, too, could be heard in the distance, and now and then wagon-wheels. The world was beginning to wake up, and the sun to be warm. Dorris finally turned and looked at Harry for a long time. On a sudden impulse, she broke out:

"Harry, why did you marry me?"

"Good heavens, child, what has happened? You have rather a blue outlook on life in general to-day. What has struck you? Aren't you happy?"

"I am serious, Harry. Why did you marry me?"

"By Jove, you're a puzzle,—a fascinating devil. I didn't suppose you'd interest me so much after three months. You're still the same sweet, misunderstandable being you were before."

"Is that why you married me?"

"Oh, I suppose so."

"But, Harry, I like you less than before. You know that. We have made a mistake. You"—

"Dorris, stop at once. Can't you be half-way decently agreeable on this romantic parting that you have designed?"

"I felt I could tell you better now in the early morning before you leave me, than at any other time. Listen to me, Harry. We have made a serious mistake."

"If you mean I am not a long-haired poet, and can't write sentimental letters, or speak to you foolishly, perhaps."



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"Precisely; you do not even grasp my meaning. That isn't what I mean, Harry. We can't go on like this forever. I tell you I can't stand it. I am unhappy. *You* will not understand."

"Dorris, girl, the trouble is your youth and enthusiasm have blinded you to common sense. This infernal dreamy strain in your blood is enough to set a man crazy."

"Yes, I know," she answered, "I have always loved to day-dream. Way back in my happy and unusual childhood when I was but eight years old and Daddy was appointed American Minister to Italy, where we went together, I liked to be alone—to imagine things. He left me in Bologna and Florence while he fulfilled his social and official duties in his much-loved Rome. Yes, his little girl Dorris was a dreamer then, in her walks in vine-clad Tuscany or in that beautiful Italian garden where she read so much. I have always loved to romance, Harry. After all, I must have inherited it from Daddy. Dear, dear old Daddy! Harry, he told me the most fascinating tales from his fund of interesting stories, so that during his absences he left me with many a dream to cherish, many a study to pursue. Under his tutelage I acquired more general information than during my years at school or the period when I read most. What dream-days we did have together, Harry."

"Do you know that Daddy brought me up merely to spoil me? He encouraged my every caprice, and inculcated the belief that I was a sun in the universe with the rest of humanity my obedient planets. Lying awake at night I could not fancy a desire that I knew would not be granted with the dawn. I see his mistake now that he has been taken from me, for he has spoiled me entirely

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for strangers. It would have been different if we could have lived together forever, but you see all the trouble was that I fancied he was the prototype of the world I was to meet. He was so sweet in all the little things—and how patient! We read much together and he laboured with my French for a long time. One day I remember in Bologna when I was unusually dull, he said sweetly: ‘You are the possessor of retentive memory and keen wit.’ I learned this phrase by heart, and consulted an English dictionary in private. When I was certain I had mastered the sentence, I confronted Daddy with it, and I shall never forget the pleasure it gave him.

“He was a pedant, Harry, but there never lived such a delightful one! How he would have loved to see Greece with me. It was one of his most cherished dreams. You see, Harry, I always bore you by bringing up his memory. You were asking me about dreams. Why, it seems it is innate in me to dream. I even romanced on our return to America, when I was beginning to develop into girlhood. I was such an ugly child. I met Cordelia at that time, and I rather fancy her memory of my mother’s beauty made her dread the time when I should be presented socially, for my temporary angularity was very unbecoming. Cordy could not understand my poetic turn. To her,

‘A thing of beauty is a joy forever.’

“She and I read and talked together much about the beauty of this world. As I was always encouraged in these talks, Harry, I presume I cannot understand your practical mind. When I was sent to Spafford to school, I lived entirely in the novels and poems I read. When I

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first arrived there, the principal reproved me once; she never got another chance to do so, however, for I told her I would write to Daddy to take me away. Thereafter as the monitor of the study hour passed my desk and found me reading of the Lily Maid of Astelot, her hopeless love for Lancelot, and her death journey in the gilded barge, or trying to comprehend the tragic beauty of Endymion, instead of translating 'Nepos,' she pretended to be blind—and I smiled."

"Yes, Dorris, and I suppose 'Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves' gave you restless nights. I fancy, then, you dreamed you were scalding them all, in pumice-stone or porphyry vessels of enormous size. What would have interested you most, however, would have been your yellow satin trousers and black hair. Still, I understand your weakness in preferring to dream of the love-sick Elaine, because you must admit you do not look like a Turkish harem. You would never please a Sultan. You could travel alone on horseback all through Turkey without being molested. Your yellow hair would scare them. A pity you must ever wake up from your dreams. Life is not a Turkish bath composed of incense and yellow satin trousers. Dorris, you cannot utter a sentence without indulging in stilted, flowery language," he laughed.

"It sounds rather pretty, though, because it sort of encircles your affection for your father. It is really beautiful, honey. I do wish I had known him, dear. But it's all because I didn't see your pretty, pale face till after he died. Did you ever know, Dorris, speaking of romance, that the year you came out I was crazy to meet you? I read loads about you in the society columns. You had a lively winter, I should imagine—rather a jolly success."



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Dorris did not speak for a moment, then she shook her head thoughtfully. "It was a sad winter, Harry, and the memory of my partial success is dimmed by that terrible tragedy that came so early in my first season. Harry, I was heart-broken. You see all I ever knew was love—the love of Cordelia and Daddy. Harry, it was unutterable; he was such a gentle father and beloved comrade, faithful alike in shadow and in sunshine, at once playmate and instructor."

"Hush, Dorris," said her husband, "do not think too much about that. Do you know what an artist told me when he heard I was crazy about you? It was this. I am glad I remember the exact words. 'She is, for her type, without fault, the type of the *fausse maigre*, with the pale cheek, the red mouth, the vivid glory of the hair, and the slender, pointed finger.'"

"How sweet of you, Harry, to tell me. Now, who was it?"

"Don't you believe it. I won't tell you," laughed her husband. "Dorry, tell me something about your mother's death. It will not give you so much pain as the more recent one. Really, this was a jolly idea of yours. It is quite pretty and rustic here. Tell me about her."

"Harry, Harry! Rustic!" said Dorris. "You might as well stand before the Knickerbocker Trust Company, and say, 'How rural!' Don't you know I know nothing of my mother? Her memory has always brought heart-aches to Daddy and Cordelia. Whenever I have spoken of her, even Cordy has seemed apprehensive, and she was my mother's best friend. I shall never forget Commencement Day at Spafford. As my eyes scanned the audience and met Daddy's frank gaze, I thought of

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that mother I have never known. I felt I had a right to the confidence of those who loved me best. Somehow, that day a sense of tragedy awakened in me. When I answered his faint smile, it seemed to me there was something inscrutable in his face.

"Immediately after, when Daddy surprised me by telling me of his rental of the Palazzo Specchio-Torni in Venice, I had a mad desire to ask him about the mystery concerning my mother's life, but did not dare. During the entire summer her name was never mentioned. Harry, what do you suppose lies at the bottom of this strange mystery?"

"Looks like a lady with a *past*," answered her husband.

"Oh, Harry," said Dorris reproachfully. "How vulgar, how inexcusably vulgar, you are. No wonder I am unhappy. I was speaking of something near to my heart. I have fancied sometimes she is still living."

"Nonsense! What are you driving at?" he asked.

"There! You are coming to the point. I am 'driving at,' as you say, the fact that I do not care for you, that I am your wife and—"

"Of course, you're my wife. Let's start back to get some breakfast. Are you sorry I'm going?"

"Not the least bit in the world," Dorris answered frankly. "I am sorry, though, about your father."

"Did it ever occur to you, Dorris, that since we were married you haven't taken life quite seriously enough?"

"Exactly; it has, many times, now my honeymoon is over. It has been hateful to me. You will not take my talk to heart, so I suppose I can't hurt you. What an absurd time we have had," she said, looking down the Avenue de la Stade.

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"Perhaps a few months' absence then will do you no harm. Dorris, I should like to make you love me, dear, but I can't. All I ask from you is that you give me the right respect, that you be faithful to the name you bear, and to me. Dorris, keep pretty much with Mrs. North. You don't know very much about men, and you've had no chance to, being under my protection. You're young, you know, and devilishly handsome. Come on, sweetheart, I say. The sun's hot, and I'm hungry. I'll never get off by nine, at this rate. That's the girl!" They left their secluded seat under the trees, and began walking down the broad avenue leading to the Place de la Constitution.

"Now, Dorris, I know it's been hard for you, a little," went on Harry, "without him, or Cordelia—and it's all strange and new. We haven't got levelled down yet. There are sharp edges to both our natures that need polishing. Separation will be good to think in. In fact, it's a good scheme, this. I'll not be gone so very long anyway. And, Dorris, don't you think it isn't because you don't care. When I come back to you, it will all be different. Just think of me now and then, and be nice to Mrs. North. Take her advice and ask her about things. How glad I am you are not a flirt. I'm so glad I can trust you."

"Here we are at the Place, Harry, and we're late. It's half-past seven; they'll all be waiting."

And sure enough in the waiting room of the Grande Bretagne, the Norths with Porter Freeman and the Honourable Roland Barker were waiting for what Porter termed "the lovers," with fruit baskets for Harry.

"To the dining-room!" shouted young Porter. "Nobody up. We have the whole hotel to ourselves."



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They breakfasted at a prettily appointed table in the center of the dining-room. Mr. Barker continually made fun of the English breakfast, and assured Harry he would find himself in better condition for a Greek steamer when he got to Patras, if he had had coffee and rolls in his room.

It was really a children's party that climbed into the carriage and drove off to the station. Harry vowed he was sorry to leave as he stood on the platform breathing the April morning air and looking over the red, poppy-covered fields.

He had a chance to give Mrs. North a little talking to, and to say good-bye to Dorris.

It was merely, "Be good. Remember I'll be back soon. Write often."

He was on the train and the whistle blew.

In her room an hour later, Dorris stared at her face in the mirror. Through her ears was ringing:—

"How glad I am I can trust you. . . . Be good. . . . Remember I'll be back soon. Write often."

How extremely considerate of him to say good-bye at all! Dorris at any rate was glad it was all over, that he was gone. What a good-bye for a bride!

"Yes, he shall trust me, and I shall be true to the trust," she ruminated. "But how tiresome not to be in the least bit alarmed; to treat me as if he *knew* no man could by any chance get me away from him. Oh, dear me! I could laugh. And when he comes back, I have half a mind to frighten him,—just upon the edge of trouble. Fancy my dear, commercial Harry sharpening his sword with some Italian count or Greek prince. Now if I might manage to feign something, or if I could have

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arranged it before, he needn't have left me with such a degree of assurance. There isn't a woman in the world who wouldn't resent it."

She took up her father's photograph, and examined it rather more critically than she had ever done before. The firm jaw, the tender eyes—firmness and tenderness personified. As a husband, had he ever said such a good-bye to her mother as she had heard to-day? She did not believe it. Her mother must have known what love was. Why had Dorris cast it out by her rash marriage? She *would* know since it was at the mainspring of life! But how? Through the calamity which Mr. Barker had hinted at? Sometimes it seemed to her that a great tragedy would be a welcome substitute to the dull commonplace wifehood she knew. Then she realized she was listening to her own voice. "Dorris Bedford, you are mad, mad, mad! Don't rant. You are altogether absurd."

She stood looking at herself until the music in the Place—it was a Turkish melody she heard—roused her from reverie.

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## *The Strength to Yield*

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### CHAPTER VI.

'Tis fate that flings the dice,  
And—as she flings—  
Of kings makes peasants,  
And of peasants, kings.  
—Dryden.

FROM MRS. THEODORE GUNTER,  
TO MRS. HENRY VAN LENNEP.

THE WHITE VILLA, BROOKLINE.

*My sweet girl Dorris:—*

Your second letter telling me of your intention to remain on the other side, has but just arrived. It would have been very difficult, child, to have answered that first sincerely. But you have driven me to it, and so *è così*—here goes!

I am not going to reproach you for your marriage the least little bit, but, Dorris, you have got to learn,—you have got to listen to me. What you can mean, you, a bride of three months, by letting your husband come back here to his sick father and disconsolate mother alone, is beyond my power of comprehension. You must take your marriage as a serious proposition, and the sooner you realize this, the easier your life will be. Get around it in as many different ways as you please, you have obligations as the wife of Henry Van Lennep. You have inherited nothing of your father's art of living, and as the development of this art is my one and only talent, as you have heard a hundred times, I may be somewhat narrow in passing strictures on my little golden-haired



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beauty. Your place is at present here in Brookline, whether you like it or not. Van Lennep, Sr., is improving. Nevertheless I am glad Harry will be here soon, as it is my intention to have a talk with him.

Who the Norths may be that you are traveling with is another thing beyond me. Child, you cannot pick up with people you have met casually, and trot around Europe with them. I have decided to join you. I know the uselessness of suggesting your return, so will, instead, have you under my eye for a time, at least until your husband returns to you. Stay in Venice and I shall surprise you there some day.

Also, Dorris, you're a baby! *Why* did you allow an English acquaintance to discuss your husband's propensities? Such a thing is without honour or precedent. You who are always ready to confide in the few friends you make, who trust implicitly the sincerity of the proffered friendship, cannot realize this. In our training of you, your father and I neglected much, and only by perseverance can I ever make you grasp my meaning. You seem to take Harry and matrimony itself as a joke. But there, pettie, I do not mean to hurt you. I am only trying to help you as only Cordelia can.

Paolo Cenari, that *diabolo*, is in Venice now. No wonder your friend, Mr. Barker, was anxious for him to portray you on his vivacious canvas. But look out for him, Dorris. He is a wrecker of hearts and homes. Last winter, when you had begun your social tear in New York, he came to Boston for a stay of a month or two. He is most delightful socially—but! He adores beautiful women in the strictly plural sense. A few years after I married Theodore, he told me of the youthful Paolo

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Cenari whom he had encountered in a weird episode in the far East. His capacity for experience is unlimited.

Lady Blanchard is at the Palazzo Colbrizzi in the Via Sante and will remain until June first, at which time she always hears the call of the London season and cannot resist its temptation. I am sending you a letter to her which I will ask you to present at once, as I may be delayed in getting passage, and also may be obliged to go to Budapest. It might give you pleasure to meet her. Viola, Lady Blanchard, is a widow, and rather a strange woman, by the way, with what you would call a wonderful history. I think we will be able to establish a wholly charming circle in Venice, and, after all, am not so disconsolate at your not coming back. In fact, on thinking it over, I am rather keen about presenting my handsome protégée to some clever people, and *vice versa*. And I have missed her so much, from her bewitching smile to her oddest mood. She is a ball of fascination. Well, Dorris, it's a fortunate thing that I am not a man. I fear I would have been quite servile in my devotion for you.

Brookline and Boston for that matter are dead at present. A few dinners and a ball now and then have been the only amusements afforded to old ladies like me. I never could understand why the Van Lenneps kept their house here. Ah! but you might never have met Harry had it not been for your visit here to me! The deuce! You are both New Yorkers. Why couldn't you have met in your own city?

Well, good-bye, sweet! *Avec un baiser tout affectueux*, until I can give you one.

Devotedly,

CORDELIA.

May the first, 1906.

Dorris leaned back on the red cushions in her luxurious gondola, and tore her letter to bits which she scattered to right and left. Mr. Barker looked toward a glass factory on their left, and talked about Tuscan vases. Dorris was silent.

They had almost reached the Schiavoni. The radiant spring had wooed the gardens on the Giudecca till they burst into fragrant bloom, and cast their soft reflections in the clear surface of the water. The pink pomegranate blossom vied with the delicate rose, while the marble of the *cinque-cento* palaces cried out in their gray decay to the young blooms. They laughed back that Spring was their lover and that he was the personification of youth.

San' Salute rose majestically out of the waters, and reflected the stately grandeur of its dome far into the canal. It was a dream-day in the show-city of Europe. Mr. Barker and Dorris purposed going to the Lido to bathe in the shallow Adriatic. They had been left to get the morning mail and had taken advantage of a little time to inspect the famous Palazzo Vendramin-Calergi, where walks the ghost of Wagner.

Dorris opened her parasol as they started to cross the lagoon. She looked at Mr. Barker.

"Tell me about Mrs. Barker and the two youngsters, won't you?" she asked sweetly.

"They are all so charming," he answered, "that I prefer to let you learn their faults and weaknesses after you have made their acquaintance. Really I am going to persuade you to make us a long visit after your husband has rejoined you."

"All in good time, Mr. Barker," she laughed. "I am curious about the daughter. Do tell me her name at least."



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"Geraldine; are you satisfied?"

"Clearly, Mr. Barker, you wish to tell me nothing of your friends and family."

"You will be telling me shortly I possess that much hackneyed 'mysterious presence.' " Mr. Barker laughed.

"Before we discuss this subject, let me give you a delightful bit of news," said Dorris. "Mrs. Gunter is coming over to take care of me. Your mission is ended."

"Oh, you were informed of that on the scraps of paper you threw somewhat tragically into the canal?" demanded Barker.

"Don't be humorous. Yes, the letter was from Cordelia. I had a slight disappointment in an opinion she expressed. I shouldn't speak so of her, however. We have loved each other so much. She practically brought me up. I am only beginning to take her advice now."

"Any news about your husband?" asked Barker.

"No. That is to say, he hadn't arrived when Cordelia wrote. By the way, Mr. Barker, Signor Cenari,—You told me in Athens you wished to have him paint my portrait. I know he is in Venice. Am I never to meet him?"

Mr. Barker frowned.

"Mrs. Gunter sent me a letter to Lady Blanchard. It is really quite a marvel that I didn't tear it up," was Dorris's remark.

"Suppose you wait till Mrs. Gunter's arrival to meet Lady Blanchard?" he responded.

"She has requested me to present it at once. I must obey," laughed Dorris. "I'm going to tease you. I knew you didn't want me to meet Lady Viola owing to the fact that this Cenari is one of her friends. What on earth is the mystery about him? Really, if you

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try to prevent our meeting, I'll promise you when we do, we shall pick up the gauntlet for a summer flirtation."

For the first time since she had known him, Mr. Barker appeared to be unable to grasp her humour. Both remained silent. The gondoliers were rowing fast, and they had left the city far behind. In the distance San Lazzaro rose from the crystal lagoon, a study in red and green, the red brick of its monastery and green olive and cypresses of its garden. The silver Lido stretched along the horizon in a straight angle. The hotel was becoming more distinct at each stroke. Another gondola approaching them, and the occasional puffing of the Lido steamboat were all that disturbed the sleeping waters. Mr. Barker added another cushion to Dorris's supply, and she resumed a comfortable posture. The other gondola was so near that the occupants became distinguishable. A lady in soft brown silk was holding a Pomeranian spaniel. Beside her was a man whose nationality it would be difficult to guess. As the boats neared one another, the two ladies exchanged lightning glances, but before Dorris knew Mr. Barker had bowed, the gondolas had sped past each other. In her mind was the impression of a woman slightly faded, English perhaps, and a man in the late thirties.

"Lady Blanchard," remarked Mr. Barker. "Have you ever seen her before?"

"Indeed, was it? And the other occupant? His face is strange."

Dorris lowered her head and raised her eyes questioningly to Mr. Barker. She was smiling and alluring, her dainty parasol an effective background for the white face and gold hair.

"Ah, yes,—the other. That was Paolo Cenari."

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## *The Strength to Yield*

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### CHAPTER VII.

But whether I came in love or hate,  
That I came to you was written by Fate.  
—*India's Love Lyrics.*

There was a hush in the gold room. Lady Blanchard turned to Signor Pavolo: "Yes," she began, "she is really lovely, looks like a painting by some one I cannot place. Her beauty is quite irresistible. I have seen her only once. She had a letter to me and came here to tea. You see, I was sure, being the hostess of so many illustrious people, that I needed a new face, a new beauty." Lady Blanchard bowed and laughed. "To be sure, she's an American, but speaks her language with an English accent, and is really a mere baby."

"Her husband?" quizzed Pavolo. "Is she like many of her countrywomen with a mania for leaving their lords and masters in stuffy offices across the seas?"

"From what I am able to gather, her husband returned to see some business deal through, owing to his father's temporary incapacity brought on by illness. No, she is not of the class you refer to."

"Lady Viola, your young woman seems to have the manners of a *jeune fille* in her first season," was the comment of Signor Cenari. "Really, no one else in the social stratum would dare to appear late for her first dinner at the Palazzo Colbrizzi, particularly when Lady Blanchard is its mistress. Isn't this the first American you have favoured since the rich and dull Mrs. Broadland invaded London?"



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"Paolo, you are incorrigible. Sometimes I wonder that we endure you. What do you say, Contessa?" And Lady Blanchard turned to the sombre Countess Almanda who looked at Signor Cenari and smiling, said,

"Well, Viola, the Venice of the twentieth century would be rather dull when we come to it occasionally, if Signor Cenari were not here to paint our faces and grace our dinner-tables. Now he knows as well as Conte Almanda that I do not flatter, also"—

There was another hush in the gold room. The candles flared near the gold tapestries as the butler opened the large doors at the head of the marble staircase.

"Mrs. Van Lennep!" he announced.

All eyes were centered on the figure that paused for an instant under the lintel. Paolo Cenari held his breath. It was a tall, lithe girl he saw, formed like a goddess, carrying her beautiful head high on her long, slender throat; a girl, with a white face mounted by hair of sun-kissed gold and with eyes the colour of bluebells dimmed by water; with soft, sensuous lips like Rossetti's "Pandora." "She must be the Goddess of Love," he thought, "and how daring in her winding Greek garment of delicate pink, shimmering with masses of gold roses. How daring to come gloveless to this palace with not even a ring to enhance the beauty of her long, delicate fingers."

Of what was she dreaming with the pink rose held gracefully to the clinging folds of her gown? She came forward with an easy grace. Cenari thought just then that a man might well give his soul to the devil to see her smile! *L'amor di Dio!* To see her smile! The red lips, the gold hair, in the Colbrizzi gold room! The knowledge of her extraordinary beauty seemed to have

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given her that poise which made her careless of effects, and that ease which the great lady who had dwelt in this palace five centuries before might have possessed. Lady Blanchard's concession after years of entertaining, to the prevalent fashion of presenting guests, for the first time suggested to him something beyond boredom.

At last, he was actually hearing her say, somewhat stiffly, indeed, "Mrs. Van Lennep, may I present Signor Cenari?"

"Signor Cenari of artistic fame?" Dorris queried.

"Very good of you not to have said *notoriety*," laughed Cenari?"

"Perhaps I used the wrong word, Signore."

When soon after, he heard Lady Blanchard say, "Signor Pavolo, will you take Mrs. Van Lennep in to dinner?" it seemed to him almost that she had screamed it.

Through the open windows across the canals came the stroke of eight from the Giants' clock in the Piazza di San Marco.

The gold room was redolent of delicate rose when the little party passed into the marble rotunda, and then into the dining-room, ornate in its old tapestries and older oak, the effect accentuated by the pink shades on superbly wrought candelabra, said to have been the work of Benvenuto Cellini.

"Pink is an artistic shade," mused Dorris, as she took a seat between Signor Pavolo and Conte Almada.

Covers were laid for twelve this May night in Palazzo Colbrizzi. At Lady Blanchard's right, Signor Paolo Cenari had the seat of honour. Next to him sat the divorced Lady Cheltenham, gossiping with Principe Anda to divert attention from the vivacious Signora Malvoni.

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Malcolm Forrest, an English pupil of Cenari, was contrasting the differences between two delicately bred Italians, Signora Malvoni and the Contessa Almanda. Mr. and Mrs. Page Wellington, Mrs. Henry Van Lennep, Conte Almanda, and Signor Pavolo completed the group.

Cenari inclined his head toward Lady Viola.

"I suppose we must speak Eng—I beg pardon, *American*, in deference to that golden child?"

"Really, Paolo, these Americans sometimes learn to speak, in Europe. Listen!"

The soft vowels of the language of music were being pronounced by the dulcet voice of Dorris Van Lennep. She was saying, "*è troppa bella*," and he strained his ears to catch her accent. How he envied Conte Almanda! Now and then he caught a word, a phrase, but he could not neglect the ladies near him, and soon gave up the effort to listen across the table. With his clever tongue he convinced Lady Blanchard that she was the loveliest of her sex; and, having divined the weakness of Lady Cheltenham, paid her those reverent little courtesies due to women of unsullied repute. Then he heard the voice of Dorris once more, now in conversation with Pavolo.

"No—absolutely none. This is my social *début* in Venice. From what I had read, I believed the day of its brilliance and beauty in that way had gone. I verily can imagine I am at a *conversazione* of the famous Contessa Colbrizzi with this Renaissance background and the delicate scent of the garden shrubs which one inhales in that fragrant breeze from the windows. It is a wonderful night. The moon is young. The garden must be lovely. How often I have read of the Colbrizzi Garden. What



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is its charm? Associations? Do not such names as Leopardi, Faliero, not to mention Byron and the Contessa Guiccioli, linger in the trees and flowers?"

Signor Pavolo, amazed at this young woman's complete mastery of his language, instead of answering her questions, insisted upon knowing how she had acquired it.

"You *insist* upon knowing, Signor Pavolo?" laughed Dorris. Supposing I decline to state?"

"Then I would urge the matter to a point where you could not evade me," he said playfully.

"As insistent as that?"

"Yes, really."

"Well, then, *to please you*, when a little girl, I spent some time in Bologna and Florence. When it was necessary for my father to leave me, I was placed in an Italian family he had known for years. And as I was obliged to study my French through Italian, I learned very rapidly, and I have kept it up ever since more or less in the way of opera-going, reading, and so forth. It is not in the least remarkable, really. I am going to turn to Conte Almada for relief from this incessant twaddle about myself," and Dorris laughed once more.

"Mrs. Van Lennep," Lady Blanchard called across the table, "do tell me about our friend, Mr. Barker. I have known of his arrival in Venice for some time. Is he in seclusion? He hasn't left his card, and he knows I am always at Colbrizzi in the spring."

"Lady Blanchard, if you know Mr. Barker well, you must surely have learned by this time not to expect him to do the usual thing. Who knows? He may call tomorrow. He is stopping at Danieli's. Shall I tell him he is forgiven?"

"Lady Viola is only one who protests," chimed in Cenari. "He seems to have gone out of his way to avoid me, and I thought him a staunch friend. It is shocking! But even so, he is one of the most delightful men I know."

"It would be unkind, then, to say he spoke well of you," said Dorris, and turned to Signor Pavolo.

"Why?" demanded Cenari, but received no response. He caught only a glimpse of a lovely profile and golden head, above the soft pink shades and mass of roses on the table.

Dorris raised her *chambertin* as if to emphasize the colour of her lips, which Cenari noted smilingly. Something supercilious in his glance embarrassed her. She felt she disliked that name—that man. There was something in his face, almost handsome though it was, which held her without the power to admire. But she was thinking of him, and of no one else at this table. Why *should* she think of him in any way? She let her glance wander to Principe Anda.

Conte Almanda asked her if Signor Cenari was to be allowed the honour of painting her portrait. She nodded, and Cenari volunteered that it was to be executed in the gold room, for, as she had entered it to-night, a beautiful and appropriate poem had come to him; and added, "The picture will have to be entitled 'In the Gold Room,—a Harmony.'"

Dorris was apparently preoccupied, and Signor Pavolo ingenuously inquired as to the poem. Thereupon Paolo's voice became audible only to the few about him. He raised his glass and paid a pretty tribute to his hostess.

She reminded him of Pavolo's request.

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"Ah, yes, the poem." He looked at Dorris, who lowered her eyes to lift them to Lady Cheltenham. Wounded by the memories which Cenari's reference had awakened—for the verses "In the Gold Room," had been repeated often by her father,—morbid in the fear that Cenari might repeat it *all*, she felt that the woman whose eyes she had been meeting knew her embarrassment. In her imagination, the colour was mounting to her cheeks, receding, then mounting again.

"Her ivory hands on the ivory keys  
Strayed in a fitful fantasy,  
Like the silver gleam when the poplar trees  
Rustle their pale leaves listlessly,  
Or the drifting foam of a restless sea  
When the waves show their teeth in the flying breeze.

"Her gold hair fell on the wall of gold,  
Like the delicate gossamer tangles spun  
On the burnished disk of the marigold,  
Or the sunflower turning to meet the sun,  
When the gloom of the jealous night is done,  
And the spear of the lily is aureoled."

At last Dorris breathed freely. After all, she had been absurd to imagine that he would repeat the rest. It was merely a piece of flattery, hinted by Conte Almanda.

Later, when the company had assembled in the ball-room, Lady Blanchard crossed to where Dorris and Paolo were talking. "Why didn't you repeat the third stanza?" she asked, pointedly.

"But why pointedly?" wondered Dorris. "I presume she was innocent of the contents of what Cenari had refrained from repeating. Of course, she didn't know I knew it by heart."

"Did Mr. Barker ever speak to you of Rossetti?" asked Cenari, abruptly. "They were friends, you know."



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I am sure he would have thought of a more appropriate title for a picture of you than 'A Harmony.' "

Dorris knew she showed a deplorable want of tact to express relief by a look, and tried to meet the neutral gaze of Cenari with a degree of frankness.

"How clever she is," he was thinking, divining that she knew the stanza:

"And her sweet red lips on these lips of mine  
Burned like the ruby fire, set  
In a swinging lamp of a crimson shrine,  
Or the bleeding wounds of the pomegranate,  
Or the heart of the lotus drenched and wet  
With the spilt-out blood of the rose-red wine."

After the guests had heard Lady Viola sing, they dispersed about the house and garden. A few remained in the ballroom to listen or dance to the music of the red-coated musicians.

Dorris Van Lennep waltzed "*Quand l'amour meurt*" with Paolo Cenari. The music ceased suddenly as they found themselves at the entrance to the rotunda. Following little groups, they walked slowly down the marble staircase into the court, and through the open gateway into the garden. The night air came laden with the scent of peach-blossoms. Roses were clambering wildly over the tottering walls of this garden, where the footprints of centuries, departed doge and lover, had left their subtle imprints in the yielding earth. The silver-blue of the young May moon outlined the clear perfection of Dorris's face, as she stared into the Renaissance fountain.

"Strange, when time adds tragedy to beauty it heightens the effect," she murmured.

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The passing of a gondola in the bordering canal was suggested by a soft paddle in the water and the gradual lessening of it.

"The whole scene"—it was Cenari's voice—"the sky, the air, the shadowy hands that seem to linger still over the carving on that fountain, that drifting gondola—tell me one thing"—

She waited.

"That some day, some time," he went on very slowly, "somewhere, I may give you that third stanza."

Dorris laughingly tripped her way back into the court.

"'Some day, some time, somewhere!'" she repeated. "That's not worthy of you. It's too like a college boy trying to make love."

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### CHAPTER VIII.

'Tis the sunset of life gives us mystical lore,  
And coming events cast their shadows before.  
—*Thomas Campbell.*

For a time after the dinner at the Palazzo Colbrizzi, Dorris saw nothing of her hostess or any of the guests. She felt the experience as a dream in which her fancy quarreled with the baffling smile of Lady Cheltenham, and connected it in some way with the tragic suggestions of the garden. She had thought to hear in some way of Cenari. And yet why should any word of or from him mean anything to her?

She missed the genial moods and friendly talks, perhaps, too, the good advice, of Mr. Barker, who had just left for England. It was good of him to care about exacting a promise that they should meet again, and she really looked forward to it. His receptive enthusiasm for Italian lore reminded her of her father. She wondered whether if *he* had lived she would think so insistently about renewing or improving acquaintance with Lady Blanchard's friends. It was strange that she did not meet any of them anywhere. They could not be living in dire seclusion, yet in drifting up and down, in and among the canals, all the faces she saw were those of stranger tourists. What could have become of the well-dressed people at the Colbrizzi? Danieli's sheltered none of them. It was a bore to go about dining so frequently with the Norths, meeting occasional new arrivals, usually friends of theirs, and now and then stumbling upon a schoolmate of her own, to whom she bowed stiffly in passing.



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Why should she writhe under the fact that Cenari had held her in slight respect by reciting verses whose application he had made so personal, while at the same time she resented his not making an effort to continue her acquaintance? And why should she feel an inconsistent throb of pride that he had selected her out of all the others to compliment so unequivocally at a formal dinner, when all the time he carried that supercilious look straight over the roses into her eyes? Men did not take such liberties with Roman princesses, and that he should have dared, that he should have dared!

After all, she would end this mental conflict by forgetting Cenari, by putting the whole thing out of her mind.

She spent one warm Wednesday morning roaming with Grace North over the shops on the Piazza, and on their way back to Danieli's suddenly decided that day to pay her call at the Colbrizzi.

"I can't delay much longer," she yawned sleepily to her companion, and Grace turned in astonishment.

"Gracious! Haven't you gone there yet? If I had been entertained at a Venetian palace, I'd have made my call next day."

Dorris felt uncomfortable. The Norths had really been good to her, but was that any reason why she should continually smart under their impertinence? This was not the first intimation she had had that Grace, and her mother, too, for that matter, coveted a card to the Colbrizzi.

"Well, Grace, why don't you ask me to take you with me, and be done with it?" she said petulantly.

They walked on in silence until they reached their sitting-room overlooking the Schiavoni and Giudecca, where

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Grace seemed to put everything out of her mind save the question of luncheon. While she summoned a waiter, Dorris ran into her room to replace street gown with kimono.

On her way back she knocked at Mrs. North's door and found her and Grace dressing.

"While we were out, Dorris," cried Grace, "mother says a stunning page brought you a note, and she saw from the window a handsome gondola in which he was rowed away toward the Grand Canal. Such gondoliers, too! Sh, sh, sh! It must be from Lady Blanchard."

"You'll find the note on the sitting-room table under 'The Morals of Marcus Ordeyne,'" interrupted Mrs. North. I was very particular to put it where you could find it at once."

Dorris closed the door softly. After all, Lady Blanchard had not utterly forgotten her, though this could hardly be a second invitation. She lifted the novel and found the large blue ragged-edged envelope.

"Lady Viola writes a strange hand," she reflected, tearing open the flap and reading:—

WEDNESDAY MORNING,  
PALAZZO GIANELLI, VIA CAMBERINO.

*My dear Mrs. Van Lennep,*

If you are not engaged for the afternoon and have nothing pleasanter in prospect, would you be good enough to come to my garden with Lady Blanchard for tea? She will call for you at four, and should she be so fortunate as to find you in, will try to persuade you to come.

Yours,

PAOLO CENARI.

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Dorris read and re-read the note, then tore it into bits which she threw into the waste-paper basket. She walked over to the long mirror, once the property of Doge Dandolo, and regretted that she looked so tired. She dropped down upon the couch and lighted a cigarette. Her expression did not change until she heard Grace at the door; then she looked up and smiled.

"I'm off this afternoon," she said blithely, "with Lady Blanchard, for tea in a friend's garden. Wouldn't mind taking you if I could, you know, but you really have to—Oh, never mind! You are really looking lovely. Affect white more, Grace; you are quite charming in it."

"Goodness! The ceiling will fall with Dorris Van Lennep giving compliments. Give me a cigarette."

"Little unmarried American girls shouldn't smoke," laughed Dorris, lighting one for her, "but it's almost as becoming as the white linen. I must send to Doucet for one exactly like it."

"Well, anyway, Lady Blanchard's letter must have done you lots of good. By the way, Dorris, wouldn't you like to go to London for the tail-end of the season?"

"No, dear, no, no! I'm going to stay right here. Don't let it worry you, though, for Cordelia will be here soon. Don't let me interfere with your plans. What's the matter with Venice, anyway? Not enough suitors here, eh? Ah, I know. Jack Ralling! He is going to be in London?" And Dorris playfully took Grace's face in her hands. "Come now, Grace, hand over your cigarette, and tell me why you don't think of marrying."

"Well, I like that! We all stand anything from you. Marry? How ridiculous. I—Oh, bother. I'll begin to think of that in two years from now."



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"But have you never been crazy about any one, Grace?"

"Don't be absurd? What shall we eat? That waiter should be here. What do you say?"

"Ring the bell, and we'll think about it later."

As Grace walked across the room, a soft knock at the door made Dorris start. It was twice repeated, and then the door slowly opened. Grace saw a handsome woman in a traveling suit, bubbling over with joy, and then Dorris and the new-comer were in each other's arms.

"Cordelia, Cordelia, dear, dear Cordelia!" she almost sobbed her joy. "How good of you! How glad I am to see you. And you are looking so well, Cordelia."

Mrs. Gunter for her part clung to the girl quite speechless with relief and pleasure. She gazed into her eyes, and murmured:—

"You beautiful creature! You grow prettier every day!"

(Grace, meantime, had been considerate enough to leave them alone.)

"Let me take your things off, Cordy, sweet. Sit down and rest, there, so—and get that beastly hat off as soon as ever you can. When did you come? How long have you been here? Oh, I'm just crazy to know everything at once. Cordy, oh, it's too good to have you again, dear, dear Cordy!"

"Child, we are acting like simpletons. I got in two hours late, so dusty and tired; stopped in Verona yesterday, and missed my afternoon train, so I had to spend the night there. I got the first train this morning and came down with a charming boy I had not seen for years. It is good to be in d'Annunzio's City Beautiful again, What a day! Come to the window, Dorris. What a

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delightful balcony! Almost like the one off my room in the Specchio-Torni." Dorris turned quickly away. "Forgive me, child. I forgot. I did not mean to bring up old memories. I am glad to see you. Ah, Dorris, you are such a naughty girl."

"You have talked with Harry?"

"Yes, I saw him for half an hour or so, only, though. He said he was writing two or three times a week, but gave me a letter to deliver in person. It's in my gold bag."

"What about your room, Cordelia?"

"Godfrey de Bouillon! Did you think I'd get a room before I got here?" Cordelia kissed the girl's forehead.

"Oh, then you'll share mine. It's big enough in all conscience with two old-fashioned bedsteads elaborately curtained. Don't refuse, Cordy, please. Come right along now, and get your dress changed and have a rest. I think I'd better lock you in, so you will just have to keep quiet and get freshened up after the trip. Not a word out of your head. I'll send for luncheon and feed you with my own hands. Then you are to sleep until three, and I will wake you up in time to go out with Lady Viola and me. You see I am full of mysteries. Come this way. Rather large sitting-room, this, isn't it?"

"What about Lady Blanchard?"

"Didn't I tell you not to say another word? I will tap you like a Yale man. *Go to your room; do you hear?* Now, please, Cordelia, mind, please. We will dine up here, and have the whole evening to gossip in. Keep right on disrobing. I'm sending down for luncheon."

"But the people you are staying with—the Norths?"

"In there." Dorris pointed to their rooms.

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Cordelia laughed, and obeyed her guidance.

Later in the day, after a delay in dressing, owing to a difficulty about Mrs. Gunter's trunks, the two friends found themselves fittingly attired and in readiness for Lady Blanchard's appearance at four. That lady came punctually, two of her spaniels enjoying the red plush cushions on either side of the seat in the gondola.

She did not seem at all surprised to see Mrs. Gunter in the doorway, and smilingly motioned her into the boat. The three ladies were comfortably seated and under the bridge, when Lady Blanchard remarked:—

"Paolo will be delighted to see you again, Cordelia. He has told me so much about you. He insists you are different to other Americans."

Mrs. Gunter lifted one of the spaniels into her lap and looked at Dorris. Why should the girl not have told her that they were going to Paolo's garden? It hurt her that she should have made a mystery of it. It looked as if Dorris attached an importance to the circumstance which she did not attach to ordinary goings and comings of which she was so frank to speak.

Cenari and Malcolm Forrest occupied a palace built round a beautiful garden which bordered on the Giudecca, and it was to the garden entrance that Lady Blanchard had ordered her gondoliers.

They found the two artists in the garden with Signor Pavolo.

"Mrs. Gunter, *quelle bonne chance!* How good of you to come," was Cenari's greeting, "and I see you have not forgotten your *pièce de résistance*, your amethysts. Come to a secluded spot under the olives, and tell me all about it." And Signor Cenari and Mrs. Gunter left Mr.



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Forrest and Signor Pavolo to entertain Lady Blanchard and Mrs. Van Lennep.

For the first time in all her life, the demon of jealousy shot up its head and nodded at Dorris. Of course, it was because she disliked Cenari that she felt anything at all. But if he and Cordelia had been old friends, if they had had a fast and furious flirtation, that was no reason why she should be left out in the cold, why they should unceremoniously turn their backs upon her and walk off alone. They would find they had to reckon with Dorris Bedford. "Fight, Dorris," some fierce instinct cried, "fight and prove your claim. Why, you're twenty years younger than Cordelia—twenty whole years! And this woman was your *mother's* friend. How perfectly ridiculous!"

Meantime Cordelia was saying to Cenari, banteringly:

"Genius, philanderer, heartbreaker, confess. Have you been trying your arts on my little girl?"

"Now, now, Mrs. Gunter, you know that my laws of the game render my play such that I do not include a sweet and innocent child. But you had a premonition?"

"Well, psychic phenomena aren't exactly in my line, Signor Cenari. Nevertheless, I was so disturbed over 'that sweet and innocent child' that I left Boston at a very inconvenient time. And I am speaking quite seriously."

"Indeed, well—I am going to paint her. She's worth it. Quite extraordinary on canvas, and not less so because the canvas may happen to be mine. But yet, I would have your permission, chaperon. She's going with me for a tour of inspection to-morrow."

"Horrors!"

"Am I more than one horror, then?" he laughed, but with constraint, and suggested that they rejoin the others.

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Suddenly Mrs. Gunter stood still and held out her hand.

"Signor Cenari," she said softly, "don't take my hand unless you can assure me that your game is fair. A girl of nineteen holds no trumps."

He laughed over their hearty handshake.

"Not take your hand, Lady Christian, indeed? And not assure you? Why, of course, I assure you."

It was Dorris who poured tea, after which Cenari pointed out the chief places of interest in the garden. He asked if he might show her his studio, and they stepped into the court and ascended an oak staircase at the rear.

Then Dorris found herself in the most picturesque room she had ever seen. Spacious and oriental, it looked out on the garden of the Giudecca. Old tapestries covered the walls, and the ceiling represented Mount Parnassus in fresco painted by Tiepolo. Skins of jungle monarchs, scimitars, carved blades, the antlers of the mountain antelope, and the tusks of the Indian elephant suggested to her the pilgrimage of Lalla Rookh. The mystery of the Veiled Prophet of Khorassan was emphasized by massive temple censers and the sumptuous velvet of the hangings.

On an easel near the windows was the half finished portrait of the ever-youthful Principessa Anda, while a Turkish screen hid another canvas.

"Signor Cenari, what do the Venetians or rather those of your set who come here occasionally, do with themselves all day?" asked Dorris. "One rarely sees your faces."

"Come this way," was Cenari's reply. He walked to the other end of the studio and opened a small door.

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Dorris peeped in. It was a very small room, draped in cloth of gold.

"What? You have copied the gold room!" she exclaimed, a rush of contending forces momentarily stupefying her as she studied his face.

"I am going to paint you here," he breathed.

The childishness of this studied compliment suddenly appealed to the girl's sense of the ludicrous, and she cried,—

"What a lot of time and thought you have wasted—on a poem! Dear me, you must have done a lot of walking to get that gold tint."

Without speaking, the painter stepped backward to allow her to precede him into the studio, and they crossed the room together in silence. When abruptly before the hidden easel, Cenari with a theatrical gesture, flung down the exquisitely embroidered Turkish screen showing an incomplete sketch.

Dorris was surprised into silence a moment, then she said,

"But suppose I left Venice so you couldn't finish it?"

"But you won't do that," he said.

"All the same," airily, "I don't know why you have given me that absurd pose, with my elbow on my knee like that and my chin in my right hand. I look as if I wore 'the smile that won't come off,' don't you know?"

He smiled.

As they were on their way out, Cenari paused before the door of the impromptu gold room, which was really an ingenious copy of that in the Palazzo Colbrizzi, and closed it.

"Some day, we will have a tableau on that poem in there," he said.



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### CHAPTER IX

One fatal remembrance—one sorrow that throws  
Its bleak shade alike o'er our joys and our woes—  
To which life nothing darker nor brighter can bring,  
For which joy has no balm—and affliction no sting.

—Tom Moore.

"Thank God, Dorris," said Cordelia that evening after having dined with the Norths, "we have at last got rid of those deadly people. Dorris, how *could* you have stood them?"

"Nonentities don't worry me as much as they do you, Cordy," smiled Dorris. "Pray unfasten my dress; it's too tight anyway."

"Miss North is like a thousand other girls. If you are continually in the society of such people, you are gradually pulled down to their level. It is inevitable."

"Then I have deteriorated? Is that what you mean, Cordy?"

Dorris loosened her hair till its tangled gold fell over her delicate shoulders. Cordelia watched her undress, admiring the curves of the arm and throat. At last the golden girl was in her lacey night-dress sitting at Cordelia's feet, her head in her dear friend's lap. The woman in the chair passed her fingers through the gold hair.

"'Lazy, laughing, languid Jenny,'" she murmured. "You are a Rossetti girl, Dorris."

"'Oh, Jenny, as I watch you there  
For all your wealth of loosened hair—'"

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"How dear you are, Cordelia. It is almost as if you were my mother. I love the hours with you, to feel my head against your knee and the perfect peace, Cordy. Sometimes, I have missed that mother I never knew. I have longed for her, now and then, until it was unbearable. During my honeymoon, I wanted her most, to go back to. I had never thought so much about her until then. It came to me that everything would have been different if she could have pressed my hand or kissed my hair. Was she lovely, Cordy? Tell me."

The warm perfume of the night came in through the window. The singing in the boats reached them from San' Salute, from the Grand Canal, from the Lagoon making a soft harmony. Dorris closed her eyes as her hand sought Cordelia's.

"Child, I have told you little or nothing of that sweet mother whom I loved," answered Cordelia. "I will let you know her whole history, and the history of her mother as well. You have been too young to understand. It might have hurt you; but now that you are a married woman, you must know. Dorry, you thought me hard when I tried to prevent your marriage; you couldn't know why, of course. But you should have trusted Cordelia."

"Cordy, don't speak of that. I have been a girl again for a little while. Don't make me think of that nightmare. It spoiled Naples for me, it spoiled Greece."

"Sh! girly, listen intently. Your mother, Dorris Goodwood, I met at school in France, as you know. She was an odd child, but we took a violent fancy to each other. We were disliked by the others, but always true to each other. It all began when Dorris was reprimanded for some trivial wrong-doing. I took her part, and from that

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## *The Strength to Yield*

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day, we were bosom friends. She was a little older than I, and much more than a little more brilliant. Not quite as pretty as you, I think, but very lovely in my eyes.

"During vacations, we would travel with her family, or Dorry would come to my father's place in England. We had a wonderful childhood. The celebrities we met enlivened our natural interest in the artistic world, and we became bookworms. When Dorris was fifteen we were sent to Signora Baltini's finishing school in Florence, and there we stayed for two years. Those days in that beautiful city make up the recollections I cherish most. We were obliged to remain through the summer of our first school year, owing to some family troubles of which we were ignorant. Later came the news of Dorry's mother's death, which clouded our second year, for her grief was mine also. Oh! I shall never forget my efforts to comfort her. Sometimes I fancied she had almost forgotten it, on our rambles to Fiesole, or prayers in the Annunziata."

"Poor children," whispered Dorris.

"At last we read together Hegel's 'Philosophy of History,' and decided to adopt a philosophy of our own. We intended fathoming the art of living. As I have said many times, this has been the only talent I possess. Well, dear, I started to acquire it with Dorris Goodwood, in the flowered gardens and cypress walks of *la bella Firenze*.

"It was with heartbreaks, almost, that we left the school, for we were sure it had been different from others. Yet we obeyed instructions and sailed for our 'ain countree' one fine June day. The following winter we made our *débuts* in Boston, where Dorris proved to be the season's beauty. Before Lent dispelled our many festivities, Dorry had fallen in love with that darling, Fitzgerald Bedford,



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who was visiting the Ashbys, and I had met that never-to-be-forgotten being, Theodore Gunter.

"The night before Dorry's marriage, she was told of her mother's death tragedy. She had loved my father, it seems, and had fought against it with great courage. The details I have never fully known. At her own request, she was taken to Egypt by her husband, where she took a malignant fever and died. This thrust a gloom over Dorry's honeymoon, for it seems, Dorris, that all your family are destined to have unhappy wedding journeys, but I must not dwell on that. I believe I was saying a gloom had been cast over Dorry's honeymoon. Yes, but she came to your father's house a stately queen.

"My own wedding came, and shortly after it a visit to your mother and father. I have never, never seen such a home! It was a vision of Arcady! We lived in a house of love, a *ménage à quatre*, and were all ideally happy. Fancy, Dorris, dear, not only two lovers, but four! How I love to recall those days. Now that time has mellowed them, it seems,—it seems I see even their perfection through rose-coloured windows, if such a thing can be! I shall never forget our nights at the opera, and the little supper that awaited us at the Fifth Avenue house, or those we spent around the library hearth, while Fitzgerald read our favourites to us, or we all talked astronomy or romance. They were dream-days, like the days on the Florentine hill.

"Dorry and I looked at the brides around us and laughed. 'We are both made for Paradise,' was her pet saying. Theodore and I had to leave them at last, and to Brookline we went. I wrote to Dorry three times a week. When the time came to think of you we waited anxiously,

oppressed by many unformed fears. The little Dorris arrived, a fat pink baby, and Dorry lost interest in everything in the world, even partially in her lover-husband, it seemed, for her child. She was completely happy. It was beautiful to know what a lovely mother my friend of happy school-days had become. A year after your birth she was far prettier than she had ever been before. Not quite as tall as you, she possessed your figure. She was of a more vivacious type, all colour, yet not quite so perfect as her little Dorry.

"All went smoothly until the summer after your birth. Your father took a house at Saratoga Springs, where we five went in June. Dorry began to go out a good deal again, and receive her meed of adulation. Little by little we all noticed a change in her. She was frequently petulant, and subject to moods and fancies we had never known in her before. Fitzgerald paid no attention to them, until they became worse and Dorry said things that hurt him so, he would leave the room with wet eyes."

A faint shudder crept over Dorris.

"I tried to get Dorry's confidence. My efforts were quite futile, however, for even to me who had known her heart's secrets, she had suddenly become as inscrutable as a sphinx.

"Among the very frequent visitors at her summer house were, or was, I mean, an Englishman."

Cordelia frowned.

"He called three or four times a week, and rode with us often. We guessed he admired Dorry a great deal, that was all. Fitzgerald had never been jealous of her, and always trusted his wife. Why this very agreeable Englishman couldn't have stayed in his own country, is too deep for me."

"Cordy, don't tell me my mother—oh! I feared it, God knows I feared it! Harry put it into my mind by a vulgar remark. You had better not have told me, Cordelia, I'd rather never have known!"

The big tears rolled down Dorris's cheek.

"Since I have begun this terrible story, Dorris, dear, let me tell you what you ought to know. Then we will forget it, will we not?"

Dorris for answer pressed her hand.

"Towards the middle of October, we were to have left Saratoga. Dorry had seemed somewhat more contented, and toward the time planned for our departure, became once more as devoted as she had ever been to you. We waited on the veranda; you see, she had promised to be with us— Oh, how shall I begin? We were to have had a ride, all of us, including the Englishman of whom I spoke. Eleven o'clock came with all of us waiting there for her. Then your father went into the house after her, up the stairs to her room."

"Oh, Cordy, go on. Tell it all. I can't bear the suspense."

"Well, after a moment, I followed him, haunted by the truth. And without knowing how I got into her chamber, I was suddenly looking down upon her as she lay with her head thrown back upon the pillows, and you asleep upon her breast. Your light curls kissed her throat and arm, her hand clasped your little body as if she would take you with her into the great mystery. Strange that at such a moment I should have noticed the exquisiteness of the silk garment she wore, for her sense of the artistic was undaunted to the end. I suppose the truth was that I could not realize what had happened. Then your father's eyes met mine



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in a look which stabbed, and I knew that it was self-destruction.

"His lips moved, and I, too, tried to speak. Instead of the words which would have passed between us, we knelt to take *you* from her.

"It was then that I called aloud to Dorry, to the little Dorry I had known so many years, who had been so much a part of my own life.

"I do not remember seeing your father again for hours—though in the horror and excitement which followed I doubtless did not realize much that was taking place. I think it was long, long afterward that he let me see the scrap of paper which he had found with your mother's writing on it."

"What did she say?" gasped the listening girl with staring eyes.

"That she was too weak to yield; that memories and ideals were shielding her from the man she loved; that her dead mother's face, her baby's smile, her husband's trust were fighting for her. She had loved her husband once, and her weakness made up memories which she could not forget."

"Weakness!" moaned Dorris. "Why not strength?"

Cordelia clasped her close and rained tears upon her face. She was sobbing out her heart upon Dorris's breast.

"But my poor father!" cried the girl at last. "Poor old Daddy! How did he bear it then?"

"As strong men bear their griefs, but it told upon him. He was a nervous wreck for years; and not until we had all talked to him of his duty to you, not until we brought you daily before him as you opened out like the loveliest bud, the daintiest copy of her he had lost, did he seem to

begin to reconcile himself to the life that must go on without his golden beauty. And by the time you were old enough to know a father's love, you had to all appearances taken her place in his affections, become the center of his world."

"'Help me with her,' he used to plead with me. 'She shall have everything life can give. This melancholy taint in the blood, this madness of love which came like a disease to her mother and grandmother, Cordelia, it can be eradicated; and it shall be if I live.'"

"But he is dead," was the husky whisper which Cordelia heard like a voice carried from a distance, as upon the breeze from the lagoon, and without turning her head, she knew that the living Dorris was battling, as she rose. "To think my father bore it all, and never let me know. How he must have suffered! How it must have wounded him to love her so, and know she died for some one else. What heroism to keep it from his daughter, that he might spare her pain. He would have told me some time, though, when the hour came that I must know. He was like you in that, Cordelia; you have given me the warning. And I would have been brave with him here to help me, and I could have made it so much easier for him. I know, now, what Browning means by 'the fleshly barrier,' which keeps us from knowing real truth. For sometimes my spirit lifts me out of it, Cordelia, and I know things that I have never seen or heard."

From a drifting song-boat came the strains of "*Ó, sole mio*," and instinctively the two women walked toward the window.

It was dark in the balcony where they lingered for a moment, but myriads of stars were out. The churches

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and palaces of the city rose from the waters, black in the moonless night. The song died away, and the soft sound of an oar urging a pleasure-craft into a silent canal took its place as the Giants' hammers struck eleven, each stroke coming to them across the waters with vivid clearness and rhythm.

"Cordelia," Dorris was whispering, "one can almost forget tragedy in this City Beautiful, once queen of the waters, the Lady of the Sea, the center of a great republic, the city of love and cruelty, and despair; the city of beauty incomparable. See! It rises into the night, its dear dead palaces' phantoms. How cruel, Cordelia, that such a city as this must die, with its churches, pillars, and palaces intact, and the doges gone the way of the whirling dust. Where are the old Venetian families with their red-haired maidens, made for love? It's almost as tragic as human woe."

"Sweet," whispered Cordelia, "let us go back now and"—

Dorris put up a caressing arm.

"Cordy," she said, "you aren't afraid that I am going to end as she did, she and my grandmother, are you? Is that why you told me, because I might become the slave of love? I don't think you need to be afraid, dear Cordy, for I think I can shut it out completely now. And I think I know why I have craved it so, thought it the greatest thing in life; it was that sorrow crying in my blood, that tragedy luring me on. I can laugh now. And, Cordelia, it seems to me if I could get over my dear father's death, that nothing else would daunt me."

"Dorris, just one favour you must do me. Do not go out with Signor Cenari to-morrow."



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"Apropos of what?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing at all, but if you love me"—

"He is quite harmless, Cordelia, as far as I am concerned. I was prepared to meet such a clever man, and he hasn't impressed me at all. I can't remember a really witty thing he has said. Of course, I haven't seen much of him. But he is an eminent painter, and"—

"That is the danger, Dorris. He grows on one. His influence is insidious. If I admire him even now, if I warn you—it's his personality. How can I tell you so you will understand? I enjoy his talent, I feel his power. He is a linguist and"—

"Bah! I know French and Italian as well as he."

"But promise me you won't go to-morrow, Dorris."

"Why should I promise? I want to go. I see no harm in it. He is nothing to me. I will go. You don't think, you can't think"—

"What?"

"Oh, nothing. Cordelia, tell me the name of the man my mother loved."

A fresh wind from the lagoon rustled the blinds as they walked indoors.

Cordelia silently began to prepare for bed.

"Who was the man my mother loved?" insisted Dorris after a silence.

Cordelia paused and looked at her, hesitating, sorrowful, but with just a little gleam of wonder and surprise.

"Dorry dear, can you not guess?" she asked.

The girl waited, her fancy racing furiously with an elusive call.

"Not Mr. Barker!" she gasped, and ran to Cordelia with a little cry.

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### CHAPTER X.

... She to me  
Was as a fairy city of the heart,  
Rising like water-columns from the sea,  
Of joy the sojourn, and of wealth, the mart!  
—*Childe Harold.*

"Show him up," said Dorris, and turned to Cordelia and Grace. "Be nice to him, Grace; he may paint your portrait."

"Not while you are around, Dorris, never."

"Am I such a bugbear as that?"

"We-ll, I have heard that you were handsome."

"By the way, Miss North," interrupted Mrs. Gunter with a view to pouring oil on troubled waters, "you remind me so much of a girl I met in Boston, who"—

"Excuse me, Mrs. Gunter," came the retort, "I am a Virginian."

"Indeed, I did not think of you as a child of the South."

"I am a Southern woman to the last drop of my blood."

Mrs. Gunter looked amused. "A really unreconstructed rebel?" she tormented, as Cenari was ushered in.

"Good afternoon, ladies. I hear talk of rebellion. I hope I have interrupted no sword-thrusts. Duels between ladies are my pet diversion. After all, punctuality may not be such a crime as my estimable friends seem to think."

"Signor Cenari, let me present you to Miss North, a daughter of our South," was Cordelia's introduction.

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"Miss North, ah! I have read minute descriptions of your ball-gowns in Virginia papers."

"How very flattering, but false. My mother never allows a photograph or a column concerning our movements to appear in a newspaper."

"Regrettable, is it not, Mrs. Gunter? Very regrettable, but a duchess may not protest. What a bore it must be, Miss North."

"Yes, Signor Cenari,"—poor Grace was literal—"it is rather annoying at an exclusive dance to have a reporter finger one's gown."

"Well, well, I always knew there must be certain compensations for not having been made a pretty girl."

"Goodness! But you do flatter," said Grace.

Cenari turned rather pointedly to Mrs. Gunter:

"You are coming with Mrs. Van Lennep and me, are you not," he inquired, "for an inspection of venerable landmarks?"

"Not at all," laughed Cordelia, "Mrs. and Miss North are going with me to look up some first editions of Petrarca."

"Really? You have more than an afternoon's diligent search before you, then. Suppose you allow me to present you with one in my possession."

"Signor Cenari," put in Dorris, "don't, I pray you, throw your art treasures to the winds. You will be shorn completely if you do."

"Meaning I am the winds, Dorris mine?" said Cordelia lightly.

"Not exactly winds. You are to me a fragrant breeze cooling desert sands," was the girl's tender response, given airily. "But let us be off, Signor Cenari. Good-bye, Cor-



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delia and Grace. And if either of you find an extra copy of "La Morte della Laura," don't forget me. *A riverderci.*"

Once in Cenari's gondola, Dorris cried, "I am so lazy I feel I should like to drift about all afternoon in this wonder city. Do tell me, where shall we go?"

"Drift, drift, drift! Suppose we drift over the lagoon to San Lazzaro's peaceful garden. Do you know it?"

"Yes, Signor Cenari, very well. My father and I have seen many a sun go down from its green *giardini*. What a lonely, lovely spot it is."

"*Al San Lazzaro,*" were his orders.

Across the lagoon sped the gondola in the beauty of the June day. Lateen sails reflected their vari-coloured tints in the water, some of them desolate at their moorings, others manned by stately old mariners chewing tobacco, and gloating over the spoils caught from the sea.

"The Adriatic is a wonderful piece of water, Mrs. Van Lennep. *Gli speccati* love her aquamarine depths. She washes up strange sea-horses on her golden sands and paints her shells a delicate colour. She is the mother of the octopus, and in turn, the pearl. A versatile ocean, the Adriatic. Surely there are peris lingering in her deeper waters. We rush into her shallow reefs from her long gold beach and she greets us with a tender kiss. The lateen sails may be seen all day along her cloudless horizon. She has been wed by the doges with priceless rings. She has brought heroes back to her lord and master, Venice; and she still wooes the marble steps of his dying houses. Adriatic, Adriatic—I am glad you love it."

"Can I say how much?"

"The spouseless Adriatic mourns her lord  
And annual marriage is no more renewed."

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"Yes, Mrs. Van Lennep, don't you find the fourth canto of "Childe Harold" the most adequate description of the sea-city?"

"I think it must have been one of Byron's numerous passions."

"What a life the handsome cripple had! He loved everything beautiful—he revelled in the exquisite. He was at once philanthropist and libertine, beauty-lover and cynic, poet and politician."

"Oh, Signor Cenari, why do so many Americans count my admiration of him childish? I am so glad to find a real man who regards his genius as I do."

"To me he is the master-poet of description; not of despair like Leopardi. Does anything bring home to you the ruin of Venice as much as"—

"Let me say it for you," she interrupted.

"'. . . empty halls,  
Thin streets, and foreign aspects, such as must  
Too oft remind her who and what enthalls,  
Have flung a desolate cloud o'er Venice lovely walls.'"

"You have, indeed, taken the words out of my mouth. You know with all their charm, your countrywomen as a rule do not appreciate poetry."

"With me it is an inherited taste; my father loved it. It was a large part of the life of both him and my mother."

"We are nearing San Lazzaro. I expect you know the story of the stately and impressive island. (You see, I have a passion for stories.) What a brave little woman Teresa was!"

"*La Guiccioli?*"

"No—Teresa Ceno; are you not familiar with it?"

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"Indeed, no. I have never even heard her name. Possibly, though, my father told me and I have forgotten."

"Probably he reserved the tragedies of life, when he gave you scraps of history."

"Then is this a tragedy? How interesting! The tragic has more of the ideal, somehow, Signor Cenari. Is it not so?"

"Here we are. You shall hear of Teresa Ceno and the padre when we are seated under Lord Byron's olive trees. May I help you? Jump just a little. Good! Wait, *gondoliero*."

Then the gondolier rowed to a mooring by the laterite steps. Dorris and the painter were escorted to the garden where Padre Ganza, friend to Cenari, left them to talk.

"Here we are on Byron's bench," said Cenari. "Shall I begin my story?"

Dorris dreamily looked upon the fairy city, rising like Aphrodite from the sea, then toward the Lido.

"Do tell me about it," she said.

"Teresa Ceno, a daughter of the Eternal City, came to Venice in 1590 to spend the summer with her aunt, Contessa Torni, to learn something of the ways of society, from this illustrious lady, that she might return to Rome to be the sweetest rose of the winter. Motherless, her father worshipped her.

"Contessa Torni found Teresa an apt pupil. The gentle maid improved each deficiency, and enhanced each gift. In all Venice, which she grew to love, she found San Lazzaro its loveliest spot. Here she often came to read and dream, Conte Torni's portly gondolier, Marino, playing the double rôle of servant and protector. Her



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visits were frequent until August came, but early in that month as she sat under the cypresses on the other side of the garden, she was greeted by a young priest newly from Armenia. They exchanged a few commonplaces and he passed on. She had had a chance, however, to be impressed by his handsome face and black hair well set off by monkish garb. When she came again, he waited once more to speak with her; and gradually all time spent in his company she grew to regard as precious. He enlivened her mind and lit up her fancy. The abbot noted their growing friendship, yet regarded the girl as a mere child; but one fatal day when they had been reading Dante together, the young priest kissed her hand."

Dorris merely looked at Cenari as he paused.

"That was the beginning," he went on, "but it was not the end."

"Well," said Dorris interrogatively, "what about it?"

"It was at sunset, and he kissed her lips. The city was over there bathed in red and gold."

"Well," smiled Dorris looking steadily at him, "it perhaps didn't have time to hide its face."

"This girl, Teresa, always came by the garden-gate, and now she vanished under the very eyes of the priest. He tore a page from his prayer-book and wrote upon it a message of love."

"How exciting," interposed Dorris, "just because he was a priest. Then I suppose he wrapped it round a stone and threw it at her—or, I should say, at or into her fast receding gondola."

"Well, any way," Cenari retorted, "Marino caught it and gave it to his mistress."

"And what happened then?"

"She came no more to breathe the *odium fragrance* of the garden in the court or listen to the boys at play. She went right back to Rome."

"Signor Cenari," Dorris's laugh was merry, "of all the anti-climaxes that ever I heard!"

"Just wait. Her voice and beauty made her a belle, but she did not marry. It was after her father had begged her for four years to become settled in life by accepting some one of her importunate suitors, that she lent kind ears to Principe Borni. Now, her aunt, Contessa Torni, wanted to supervise the wedding festivities, and to have them take place in Venice, but Teresa shrank from coming back to the Palazzo Torni. However, there were family complications which favoured the wishes of the Contessa, and Teresa came back to this city with misgivings and heart-burnings."

"You say four years had passed? And Teresa had scarcely seen her priest?"

"And *you* say you like poetry. Well, the night before the wedding, a *bal masqué* was given in the Palazzo in her honour. She was dressed like a nun. In the midst of the revelry, she rushed to a balcony and threw Pietro Borni's roses into the canal. An inspiration had come to her, and she sought Marino to help her carry out a plan."

Dorris yawned.

"In a few moments they were crossing the lagoon, in great trepidation, for San Lazzaro, and stopped before the now old and crumbling garden-gate. In the darkness she groped for the shrine of the Virgin where she would leave the few words the young priest had thrown to her. She kissed the page wet with tears, and raised the slab at the foot of the shrine. The soft earth yielded to her

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touch, and with little trouble she lifted the stone. Then her eyes caught sight of something white, and groping she found a sheet of parchment. She seized it and ran to the laterite steps where a solitary torch was burning."

Cenari paused, and Dorris cried:—

"If you have any story to tell, Signor Cenari, I know you are teasing me."

"Becoming interested at last? Well, the first word she read was 'Teresa.' It was a prayer the priest had written to the Virgin; and instinctively realizing this, she took it back to where she had found it and left it under the stone with the"—

"Oh, yes, the everlasting fly-leaf! Is that all?"

"The next day she married Principe Borni. One of her descendants now occupies the Borni palace in Rome, and is one of my most esteemed friends."

"I can't say I like your story, Signor Cenari; it lacks point. All that my father told me of Venice lives in my imagination,—is part of me."

"Then you really don't like a story that slips from the mind having nothing tangible as the excuse for the telling?"

Dorris flushed.

"Teresa Ceno was a fool," she said. "Fancy a sixteenth, or any other century girl flirting in that disgusting way with a priest so weak,—so unworthy of his gown. Ugh!"

The sun was lighting up the ducal palace with pale pink. Here and there Dorris caught the steel of a distant roof turned into gold by the play of light.

"So, Mrs. Van Lennep, you question my veracity in selecting that story?"



"I believe we were not discussing questions of veracity, signore, I am puzzled only to know whether it was one of your invention, it was so dull, you see,—or whether I might find it in the Blue Book of Rome. If you had told me about Alfieri and the Countess of Albany, now, or even about the time-worn Beatrice Cenci and her lover-priest,—Paolo and Francesca live with me always, haunt me, and so do Byron and his Countess. In all these there is subtle charm; something sweet underlies real romance and lingers with it, and I can even dream of lovers on such afternoons as this."

"And what in your opinion raises the romances you have mentioned above the commonplace humdrum love-affairs of the multitude?"

"It may be genius."

"Paolo was not a genius."

Dorris contracted her brows, irritated by something insistent, almost suggestive, in his manner.

"You mean *is* not, do you not?" she said.

They both laughed.

"See, the tide is rising. Look at that gondola. It seems to have left the Lido for town, and is drifting toward us. How very strange, signore."

"It's Lady Blanchard's boat," said Cenari, in a changed voice in which amusement and satire contended. "See, you can just distinguish her."

Dorris ran to the wall and waved her parasol. The boat, making good time, was headed for Venice. Dorris thought Lady Blanchard turned twice to look her way, but could not be sure. She watched the gondola a moment, and then said to Cenari who now stood at her elbow:

"Let's overtake her."

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"And leave this wonderful garden? Perhaps if you stay a little, I can tell a story that would really entertain you."

"I should be inclined to doubt it, after what I have already heard," she laughed. "Let us go."

Cenari hesitated, protested, and then reluctantly walked toward the steps.

As she was being assisted to her seat among the cushions, Dorris was conscious of a vague, tremulous uneasiness at the touch of his hand. As the gondola glided out into the lagoon, a realization that after all she had never lived as was her right, had never known the deep emotions which are the fruit of the tree of life—a defiance half mingled with fear stormed through her. In a moment, an old misery so closely in tune with some new joy, would have made her lean forward for Cenari's slight caress.

They drifted back. The boat which Dorris had had in view when she urged Cenari from the garden, was leaving them far behind, yet she scarcely remembered it at all; it was but a black speck now, the red sashes of the gondoliers standing out like solitary signals on the lagoon.

"Signore," demanded Dorris as they were turning into the narrow canal for Danieli's, "why does one intuitively expect so much more of you than one gets? I do not know for my part, but you are horribly disappointing."

He looked for the smile which might be expected as an offset to the discourtesy of the words, but she turned her head as she said good-bye to him.

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## *The Strength to Yield*

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### CHAPTER XI.

Lo, this is she that was the world's delight;  
The old grey years were parcels of her might;  
The strewing of the ways wherein she trod  
Were the twain seasons of the day and night.  
—*Laus Veneris.*

The next morning Dorris busied herself with letter-writing. She read over twice the communications to Mrs. Barker on the one hand and her husband on the other.

TO the HONOURABLE MRS. ROLAND BARKER,  
120 Prince's Gate, London.

HOTEL ROYAL DANIELI, VENEZIA.

*My dear Mrs. Barker:—*

I cannot tell you how much I appreciate the delicate courtesy shown me in your invitation to spend July with you, and regret my inability to accept, owing to the fact that my friend, Mrs. Gunter, has decided to remain in Venice with me at the Palazzo Specchio-Torni until the first week in August. Only this morning we made arrangements for the rental of the first floor of this palace and have taken steps about domestic arrangements and servants, and purchased a horse for my use to be stabled across the lagoon at Chioggia.

Nevertheless, I hope some day to have the pleasure of knowing you.

With kindest regards to Mr. Barker and many thanks for your thought,

Believe me, cordially yours,

DORRIS BEDFORD VAN LENNEP.



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Dorris sighed as the letter dropped from her hands. What a bore the conventions could be at times, not to speak of obligations to one's husband. She took up the letter to America with a distinct consciousness of duty well done; and this is what she read:—

*Dear Harry:—*

What you speak of is sheer absurdity, and you know it. Why worry about me? Cordelia is here with me now, and we have talked it over and decided to leave this hotel and go to the palace where Daddy, Cordelia and I spent my seventeenth summer. I assure you that I look forward to a renewal of the old associations of the palace as I never could have believed possible.

From what you say, I should think it would take only a small amount of clever brain-work to complete your father's interests in Boston, and come back here to me. I am glad he is on his feet again, and hope he will have a complete and speedy recovery. Love to him and your sweet mother from me, and ask the latter if she has yet forgiven me!

Don't bother about money-matters. I am so amply supplied at present that I can even afford to be tempted by a pretty trinket now and then. Cordelia heard about a very fine horse, at present the property of a man at Mestre. I may consider renting her for a little while; she can be stabled at Chioggia, where I can mount for a ride through the peaceful country along the Brenta.

Come back as soon as possible. I look for you toward July. Remember my word is final about returning at this time.

Cordelia says she sends a kiss, and to tell you she thinks

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me particularly wicked, an opinion in which I do not concur.

Good-bye,

Your girl,

DORRIS.

P. S.:—Writ to the bankers, not here or to the Spechio-Torni. D.

"There, Cordelia—two duty letters off my mind. Now what shall we do this afternoon?"

"Suppose we call at the Colbrizzi? Viola will be leaving shortly. Have you made your dinner-call?"

"No, and I'm not going to. Venice is not the place for dinner-calls. You go, and leave my card."

"Indeed, I shall do no such thing. And how, pray, would you pass your afternoon, you little savage?"

"If the Norths don't get back to spoil it, I shall have a little time to think in."

"Such wonderful thoughts, forsooth! Well, they will have to sprout at some more auspicious time. For, Dorris, I am not going alone to the Colbrizzi. What *would* Viola think?"

"She'd probably think you had my card with you."

"Which I wouldn't have."

"Why, yes; I mean to tuck it into the folds of your dress, you see, and besides you wouldn't have Viola know how hard I am to manage."

"Suppose you read while I am gone, then. You musn't be seen wandering about the city, you know. Do you know William Locke? Read 'The Morals of Marcus Ordeyne' again or Pierre Loti's 'Les Désenchantées.'"

"I haven't read the first you mention, chiefly because the Norths recommended it."

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"Well, you have something yet to live for. Locke is such a charming pedant. I know of no one whose pedantry is so inoffensive and attractive. You will love Carlotta, I know."

"I shall look it over, then, if I am left to myself."

"Really, Dorris, you are *not* very polite."

"*Rien ne sert courir, il faut partir à point.* There, Cordelia, there's your answer. Don't trouble me any more."

And Cordelia did not.

Curled up in a corner of the couch that afternoon, when she had seen Cordelia off, her thoughts wrestled fiercely with the problem of unpleasant things. She could not see the use of anything in all the world that brought misery, and she had lived nineteen years! And wasn't every condition in her life making for the unsatisfactory, working itself out in precisely the way she had *not* foreseen? Why should she be troubled with a sense of disloyalty, with a qualm of any kind, considering the mistakes she had made, the unhappiness she had borne simply because she wanted to escape from a perfectly justifiable discontent. And wasn't it to be expected that a high-spirited young lady should marry to escape some one who had asserted a right of guardianship which even her father would have denied? That she had done wrong, Dorris never for a moment admitted even to herself; but that fate had treated her with insolence, she was tragically convinced. She opened the Rubaiyat with her finger on the very stanza—

"What! out of senseless Nothing to provoke  
A conscious Something to resent the yoke  
Of unpermitted Pleasure, under pain  
Of Everlasting Penalties if broke!"

A knock at the door broke into her reverie, and when the boy entered with Lady Cheltenham's card, she sent



him away with a fierce reminder that she was not at home. The boy stared in bewilderment as he backed out of the door which closed almost noiselessly behind him. The sense of having actually scared some one into such timorous compliance as this, made Dorris laugh as she caught her reflection in the glass.

She was in an altogether different mood when Cenari's card was brought to her; and it seemed as if it was what she had been expecting all day.

He invited her and Mrs. Gunter to dine with him at the Grand Hotel, and Dorris accepted with an alacrity which secretly surprised him.

"We shall love to,—at least I speak for myself," were her words. "Rain in Venice makes life a desert. I am so glad you have come." And she looked into his frank eyes and smiled.

He sat down with an uneasy conviction that she was making game of him.

"What book holds your attention to-day?"

"Omar—ever old, yet eternally young. As old and as young as I. His philosophy maddens me, turns in upon me and twists and writhes and—oh, anything at all that is weird. Does it affect you that way? Sit down and talk to me, and try to live up to your reputation."

As he was already seated, and as her manner was anything but that of the woman he had known as Dorris Van Lennep, there was a recurrence of uneasiness. Nevertheless, there was no reason why she should be left, with all the cards in her hands.

"Genial Omar maddens you?" he repeated. "What an extraordinary girl. Pray, how do you interpret him?"

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She tried to say something, and again he was puzzled by the way she said it, but he interrupted blithely:—

“Mrs. Van Lennep, how can you be so depressed? Omar believes in humanity. I think he believes in Paradise, too.”

“Well, I can’t go so deep as to transpose his beautiful metaphors into plain English. *Parlons Français.*”

Cenari felt himself gracefully meeting her mood, and wondered at it. Dorris was amused by his evident struggle to keep pace with her, nevertheless. After all, he *was* clever. Her husband would have simply bantered her—or suggested a hearty meal!

After he had gone, all too soon, for Cenari had the art of never staying quite as long as people would like to have him, she paced the floor with a sense of being bored even by Cordelia. Cenari’s manners were so easy. He understood her, and his social tact was so exquisite that one quite forgot its art. He was the first man she had seen who wore his clothes so well that one forgot to remark it. His grace extended even to his manner of speech, whether in English or Italian, and it was wholly unstrained.

What she did not realize was, that he had studied women as closely and as conscientiously as he had studied art. And if he had the charm of the man of society, there was the *esprit fin* of the artist. How subtly he had conveyed to her the power of her beauty without words.

“Signore,” she said to him impulsively (and never had she so regretted an impulse now that she had time to consider it), “what made you commit that *faux pas* the first night I met you?”

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"Mrs. Van Lennep, I knew a man once who hated Venice. After that, can you wonder at any idiosyncrasy, even such rudeness as I was capable of in reciting that poem under the influence of your presence in that golden setting? But I am forgiven, am I not?"

"We dine with you at seven," had been her parting words.

The impression which he left upon her in the afternoon was emphasized by the conversation between him and Cordelia at the jolly little dinner at the Grand Hotel that evening. Their table was near a window where they could look out upon a night, the glory of which was heightened by contrast with a dismal day.

Dorris herself was in the highest spirits, and was satisfied just to listen to him and Mrs. Gunter as they called up reminiscences of many of their mutual friends. Occasionally Cenari would turn half apologetically to her, then, as if carried along by Mrs. Gunter's enthusiasm, would seem to forget the girl's very presence, as he caught up the thread of the conversation and pursued it. And Cordelia was so oblivious. If Dorris was so young, after all she was a married woman; and these two friends were possibly exaggerating her indifference to the world, in which, just for the moment now, they moved.

A faint idea that Cenari might be posing, setting off the handsome woman of the world against herself, for the purpose of watching effects,—crossed her mind, but found no lodgment.

It was when coffee was being served that she was distracted by the appearance of a woman alone at an opposite table, who certainly had seemed to incline her head toward them with an air of recognition. The bizarre



costume of the woman—Was she a lady? Dorris found herself questioning,—would have made her presence notable in any assembly; and Dorris was positive from a swift survey of Cordelia's face that she, at any rate, had never seen her before.

Why should Cenari's expression have undergone an indefinable change? Not that he was embarrassed, for he was not; but Dorris was certain that he was annoyed. His conversation with Cordelia was abruptly ironed flat, and Dorris, exulting in her perspicuity, sipped her Turkish coffee and furtively studied the stranger's face. She was *déclassée*, fashionably so, and of Cenari's under-world. Why should this interest her,—the problem of his acquaintances dining alone in public places? But there was a fascination in the unknown aspects of this Italian's life, and try as she would, her thoughts reverted to it.

They passed out upon the terrace for their gondola a little later, and Dorris was confirmed in her surmise that Cenari had been disturbed at dinner. Cordelia appeared serenely at ease with him, however, even when the tension and reserve were marked.

After listening for a time to the singing in the boats, Cenari seemed almost to invite an end to their evening together, and when he assisted Dorris to alight, shortly after, and asked for a sitting "day after to-morrow," she rather curtly refused.

Did he suppose that she had not seen that woman from the Grand Hotel pass into the court through the Schiavoni entrance?

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### CHAPTER XII.

Youth with his half-divine mistakes  
She never can forgive,  
So much she hates his charm which makes  
Worth while the life we live.  
—*Last Poems of Laurence Hope.*

A hundred years before the Renaissance had transformed Venice into a show-city, the marble walls of the Palazzo Specchio-Torni—where Cordelia and Dorris had now become established—were standing. In spite of its *cinque-cento* origin, it remains one of the loveliest palaces in Italy. On the Grand Canal below the *Accademia*, its garden-wall is wooed by the green of its vines which hang far into the water, while within its heavy iron gates, many a crime of the Council of Ten was conceived, many a tragedy enacted. Its history abounds in romantic tales, from the time of Prince Specchio to Teresa Ceno of Rome; and from her day down to the eighteenth century, innumerable murders are detailed as having taken place in the court. Maids were wooed and duels fought in the moonlit jessamine garden, while within, in the lighted ball-room, the brilliant *conversazioni* of the Contessa Torni were taking place, or the masquerades of the carnival which lasted till the dawn.

It was the floor which contained this ball-room and the reception rooms opening from it, frescoed by Veronese, that Dorris and her friend occupied. Their sleeping apartments overlooked the Grand Canal and were separated by the Carrara marble of the sunken bath. This luxurious room, doubtless designed by some favoured courtesan,

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ornamented by carved mermaids and a statue of an unknown Venus, had caught Dorris's fancy.

A few mornings after their arrival, she and Cordelia were taking their coffee and rolls in this room which was typical of the beauty and pleasure-loving Venetian of the golden age.

"Dorris, dear," Cordelia was saying as they sat together on the slope of the unused bath, "it almost seems to me that ages ago when perfumed water flowed into this bath, that Venus over there, turned her head like Galatea. At first I didn't like her, but she grows on one. She possesses something of the stately grandeur of a Phidias, softened by the grace of a Canova."

"Yes, last night when I came in here with a lighted candle, I was almost tempted to ask her who chiselled her lines, but feared that she might quicken into life. I can see her riding to hounds, Cordelia."

"Perhaps, after all, Dorris, she is a Diana."

"No, Cordelia, she is not the goddess of the hunt, but rather Cytherea rising from the sea. She could love, and greet her lover with outstretched arms and a passionate kiss."

"Like a loyal wife!" finished Cordelia, with a note of reproof in her tone.

"Ah!" said the girl, unheeding, "body and soul she was owned by some Italian, painter or sculptor, whose spirit was above the commerce of Venice, and who crowned her with laurels and flowered wreaths. I feel that he worshipped that statue. Can't you see, Cordelia, that is why she is so human?"

"Dorris, you little pagan; even so, your idea is beautiful in itself, if it applies only to poetry. Fancy a sane man



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like Cenari, gathering jessamine and laying it at her feet. Or is he, like the strong men of Greece, worshipping this deity merely as a medium, a symbol only, of the divine? I love the mythology myself."

Dorris looked up dreamily at her friend.

"What was that you said about Cenari?" she inquired.

"Well, Dorris, to come down from the smiles of Correggio madonnas to earth, and the worshipping of Venus, when do you expect you will get back? I am rather disappointed that Cenari rides. It will be quite insufferable if he is going to take you away from me daily. Where do you suppose he got the horses? Your saddle will probably not fit."

"Oh, there are lots of horses in Mestre and Padua. I am not worrying about that. I do not care in the least if the saddle is so small that I shall be quite miserable, or so large that I shall have a bad fall. You may be surprised that I am glad I am going. You don't seem to want me to have a good time. If you prefer," sarcastically, "we can take the train to Chioggia, instead of going in the ordinary way by gondola. I hate to think of it, though, as it is such a fine trip over the lagoon on a day that promised so much when I awoke. Now, don't interrupt or answer me one way or the other for I must get into my habit."

Dorris stepped into her spacious bed-room of black oak, in the center of which was a four-poster curtained in rose silk. The ceiling was of carved oak, and the walls of rose tapestry, softened by an occasional mirror encased in gold, or a portrait of a dead Spechio or Torni. A huge antique dressing-table loaded with Dorris's silver, a large carved Venetian chair with seat and back of leather, and two

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Persian rugs completed the furnishings. One of the three balconied windows gave upon the palace garden.

It was with anxious affection that Cordelia bade Dorris good-bye, and waited by the window until the gondola should be out of sight.

"Strange," she meditated, "that black gondola following them as it were, but I suppose that must be my notion. Still, I have not seen a closed boat since my last visit here. How weird it looks with its black bulk against the summer sun."

She left the balcony and stepped into the room. There were times when she regretted that she had left Brookline to come here. Dorris had married against her counsel and advice, and surely now that she was a woman grown, her own responsibility was ended. But it was not the sense of responsibility that held her here after all, but the demands of affection. Dorris filled the place which her own children might have held, though as she felt just now, Cordelia could have hoped that her own might have been more tractable. She did not approve of Dorris's growing interest in Cenari—and she had her own reasons for being anxious about that black gondola.

Her little Italian maid seemed purposely to break into her reverie. Could she be of service to the signora? Cordelia surveyed her smilingly, and then said suddenly:—

"Do you know the Palazzo Colbrizzi?"

"Yes, signora."

"Then you can do something for me. Hurry there at once. See Lady Blanchard. Ask her if I may go to her, or if she will come to me; and do it quickly." And Cordelia took a *lira* from her bag and pressed it into Maria's hand.

When the maid came back, as she did presently with the message that Mrs. Gunter might, perhaps, take luncheon with Lady Blanchard, Cordelia was annoyed. She had made other plans for the middle of the day. However, the deed was done, and she hurried to the palace.

Lady Blanchard had her ushered into the gold room, and rose graciously to meet her.

"My dear, this is a pleasure," she said. "And Mrs. Van Lennep? Do you come so far without her?" Her eyes opened wide at Cordelia's sudden air of hesitation. "She is off with Paolo? Well, well, you must be proud of that handsome girl, proud that she is not your daughter, I mean. The whole city is ringing with her conquest. He is charming, really."

Cordelia disclaimed any alarm, and Lady Blanchard continued:—

"They say he even takes a chaperon to protect her from spiteful tongues when they dine together. It's a new rôle for you, my dear, that of *duenna*. Wasn't it my very good fortune to have brought them together? I am delighted. The affair really promises to be quite the most startling Venice has known for some time."

"I can see how perfectly delighted you are, Viola; you don't need to put it into words."

"But the girl knows the game so well; youth and experience seem to go hand in hand in that easy, primitive way."

Cordelia turned upon her.

"Viola, you may joke about your admirers and mine, to me. But understand this, Dorris is not to be spoken of in that way. She is not a flirt, and never will be. As for Signor Cenari, I have failed to notice any devotion on his part at all. I admit that she would be wiser to drop his



acquaintance entirely; it does her no good. And his name has been linked with that of so many women," Cordelia looked daggers at her friend, "that however innocent of wrong Dorris might be, or however slight her acquaintance with him, evil tongues might wound. She has never had a breath against her good name. Do you think this hurtful to her?"

"Hurtful, how? How very, very literal. And you Americans talk about English lack of humour! Can't I ever jest about your precious child? Why, I have even caught *you* up!"

"But, Viola, this is a serious matter to me. I don't want Dorris jested about. You understand quite well how near that sort of thing may be to people's real belief in wrongdoing?"

The butler announced the serving of luncheon.

"Cordelia, perhaps Dorris — pardon me, Mrs. Van Lennep—is really too young to know such men as Cenari." She drew her arm caressingly through that of Mrs. Gunter as they crossed the room. "To speak seriously, she might do well not to be seen with him alone; and if you can induce her to be wise and drop him entirely—well, it would be better."

Cordelia was fully aware of Lady Blanchard's play; fully convinced of what she had long suspected, and which the Englishwoman thought she was so cleverly hiding. Cenari, certainly, was more than a match for one less feline than Viola.

But they passed into the rotunda chatting pleasantly.

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### CHAPTER XIII.

'As I ride, as I ride,  
Could I loose what Fate has tied,  
O'er each visioned homicide  
That came vaunting (has he lied?)  
As I ride, as I ride?

—*Browning.*

Dorris and Signor Cenari were pacing their horses across the green meadows of the Brenta valley to the tune of goat-bells and a merry shepherd's lute. The country was bathed in summer sunshine, and the Brenta was so calm that the reflections in its surface were as perfect in detail as the trees and shrubs that cast them.

"We are nearing Mira, Mrs. Van Lennep," said Cenari at last.

"Oh, I am so glad. I have always wanted to see its famous villa. But see in the distance, villa after villa rising into the air! How white they are; and there is a pink one!"

Dorris pointed with her crop.

"It is beautiful. Do you know, the horizon over there looks like the fairy city of Cadiz rising out of the blue Mediterranean? Let us find the road again. And tell me the history of each villa."

"Do you see the second villa from the pink one? There Prince Armonte committed a crime similar to one by a member of the Borgia family along the shores of Lake Como. He poisoned his wife, of whom he was insanely jealous, and left a deadly draught fresh upon her lips. Then he had her lover informed by one of his guards, and

he came by midnight to kiss the lips of his lady for the last time. He sucked the poison from them, and died beside her. In the next villa, one of the Carloses of Spain brought a beautiful mistress, afterward stabbed by his brother, who in turn killed the king in a duel fought for her. But around that pink summer palace, the most pathetic memories cling. A doge, whom I know you admire far too much for me to betray his name, desired the daughter of Count Giuseppe Mazza who had built his wife this lovely home. Giuseppe was a Florentine, but he summered here. His daughter was quite a celebrated beauty and was betrothed to a young Florentine nobleman at the time the doge fell in love with her. He saw her at Murano one day when he was inspecting the glass-works, and again at the masqued ball during the Venetian carnival, which, as you know, is now a thing of the past. He had her watched and taken by night to the ducal palace; then planned keeping her captive at a lonely house in a small canal, with a shrew for guardian. Sometimes at four in the morning, sometimes at midnight, she was taken gagged to him in his apartments in the palace. This went on for a very long time. Her father, Giuseppe Mazza, crazed by her disappearance, offered enormous rewards for her recovery, and her *fiancé* severed all connections with the family who had caused him such humiliation and pain. It was the talk of the Italian ball-rooms of the day.

"Isabella, who for reasons of safety was always conducted to the prison of the palace, and then led across the Bridge of Sighs to the doge's rooms, was unhappily seen one night, by an enemy of the duke. Thereafter, every night he watched until he ascertained without any possi-



bility of mistake, the truth of his suspicions; and upon confirming them, informed the wife of the doge who placed a *letter cachée* in the fatal box demanding the head of the girl—quite like Salome—or else that of the doge himself. The latter, terrorized that his intrigue had become public to the extent of demanding the death of his mistress by his wife, conceived a horrible crime. After dwelling upon the solution of the problem, he decided that Isabella should come that very night, as before, doing nothing to countermand orders already given to this effect. So the poor little captive came. She was dragged into the prison, from that awful gondola as before, up the stairs, across the Bridge of Sighs, just the same. But on reaching the other side, two executioners awaited her, and off went her lovely head across the block. It has always seemed to me that those men, forced to obey their master's orders, shed the most innocent blood that Italy has ever known. I never go to the doge's palace, Mrs. Van Lennep, and see the chill cells, dark passages and beheading block of that most terrible of prisons, but I think of a sweet young girl being dragged, masked, and in a blue shawl, ostensibly to the arms of a man she loathed, but in reality to a perhaps more welcome death."

Dorris did not speak. They were nearing Mira, and the streets of the little town were quite distinct. At last she broke the silence.

"Signor Cenari, how can such a city as Venice hide such ghastly crimes? That city, beautiful beyond all dreamed-of conceptions of beauty, to nurture such tragedy! It is inconceivable, incongruous. To think of the beauty, the stately air, of the doge's palace, with its sumptuous assembly-halls and immortal paintings—to think the very

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palace containing Tintoretto's "Paradiso" and Veronese's "Marriage of Saint Catherine" should have held such dungeons of torture. How many an innocent man has gone to his death or to insanity through the cruelties of these doges. How many guilty men suffered until their punishment became injustice—the Foscari, Marino Faliero and scores of others. And in that city I point to over there, that fairy city, the queen of the seas! But I love her with all her tales of debauchery and crime and love. I love her!"

"Even a city must pay the price of beauty, Mrs. Van Lennep. We all pay for our endowments or for what is showered upon us, as well as for what we take. A man pays a price; a woman pays a price. There is nothing in all the world worth having, nothing in the world worth the choosing, without the denial of something equally great or greater. There is nothing in the world we enjoy but that we pay a penalty. We buy all we have. Ah, but here we are in little Mira, poor, dead town! Is she not sweet?"

"And now you must show me Byron's villa. I am glad after all that I have never seen it, it will be a new pleasure. Are we near it?"

"There it is," said Cenari, smiling, as he pointed to a house among the trees.

"That is the villa of the Countess Guiccioli, the place where she fled with her lover, in defiance of her father, the memory of her mother, her brother—her husband. How could she have been so weak, or so strong, as to have come here?"

"Ah, signora, to the Italian who loves as she loved, the world, its conventions, its honours, its social favours,

mean nothing—less than nothing. She came with her husband's consent, strange as it sounds to tell it; and her brother came prepared to kill Byron, but such was the spell the poet cast that after five minutes' conversation, the boy melted—even promised to help them in every way. The love Contessa Teresa bore Byron makes one of the most beautiful romances in history. He must have been much to have inspired the love of a convent-bred girl, newly wed, with all the world at her feet, with the ideals she must have had."

"What do you mean, Signor Cenari? She was received socially, owing to her noble birth and affection for such a great man."

"I was thinking about the fleeting five years until she lost him; of his death away from her when she was but twenty-two. Fancy her unutterable grief, so young, with her romance ended, and a romance that meant her life; to have known so deep an emotion, and then to have it pass away, into nothingness, into memory, with a long life before her without his tenderness, without his simple understanding. And how easy to forgive that *liaison* when we think of the far worse life it lifted him from, when we know it bequeathed to him the first perfect happiness he had ever known."

"It has always been to me the most wonderful love of history," said Dorris softly. "Somehow, in America we women seldom find it. Perhaps we are incapable of it. Shall we dismount and visit our villa?"

Dorris smiled.

"I forgot to tell you, Mrs. Van Lennep, that it has been turned into a school. Do you still wish to inspect it?"



"No, signore, that would spoil it for me. Suppose we ride back. Then I shall have seen its exterior and garden-walls. I can always dream of a great poet, his handsome face turned towards a young girl with delicate golden curls, his arm linked in hers, wandering in that garden. Come, turn."

"Signora," demanded Cenari, after an interval, "have you quite made up your mind that you will not sit for me? The gold room is in readiness for you. Won't you come?"

"Pray how can you work in such a small room? I thought it was a joke, a pretty compliment. You did not mean it?"

"Not mean it! I have the candles ready to light up your face. It will be original at least"—

"If I do not come," she laughed. "And if I do come, will you entitle the portrait 'A Harmony—in the Gold Room'?"

"Whatever I may call it, it would be harmonious, if I were allowed to keep my promise and repeat that stanza to you."

Dorris felt the confusion of the colour which crept into her face, and was irritated that this man should insist upon embarrassing her with references which were unpleasant, unwelcome. She asked herself whether this were offense which was making her pulses leap to be near him.

"Signore, my saddle is uncomfortable, and we have got to hurry back. Cordelia will be anxious if I am late."

Accordingly, they set their horses to a gallop down the dusty road, Dorris cruelly lashing the sorrel she rode, until she awakened to the fact that she had drawn blood. What was the matter with her that a tempest of feeling should sweep her common sense from its moorings? But

that something in the presence of this man had maddened her, she knew, as she went on reckless, leaving him far behind. It was her horse that was impelled to stop; bringing her up to the entrance to a footpath leading to a copse, she was thrown suddenly forward in her saddle, and when Cenari rode up, she was congratulating herself that she had regained her seat.

"Bad horsemanship—or womanship, eh, *Marchesa*? I almost thought you were running away from me."

"So I was," and both laughed, "though for the matter of that, I have spells when I feel I must ride to death. I must scream, get somewhere—do something."

"Well, why don't you get somewhere and do something? It's the energy of youth. One of these days, you'll wake up and find it gone."

"It has come over me quite lately, the last two or three months. If it is nerves, the fury is in nerves to urge me on to death. I could have ridden straight into the jaws of the *inferno*. And now I am as neutral as sunset tints in Brookline."

As she spoke she started and looked at him with the air of one newly conscious. "Have I talked a great deal of nonsense?" she asked.

"You looked as bizarre as the costume of"—

"Oh, that makes me think! Who wore that bizarre costume and sat near us at the Grand Hotel, the other night? She seemed to know you."

She looked at him steadily, and he laughed—but with a slight restraint.

"To whom do you refer, *Marchesa*?"

"The lady who sat at the table next to us, and bowed," she insisted. "I want to know who it was."

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"Bowed? Did I return it?" he queried, as if puzzled. "I don't remember seeing any one I knew."

Dorris rode on ahead, watching the delicate bends of the river as it flowed silently and peacefully towards its mother, the Adriatic, and thinking of Cenari's evasive reply. She was bewildered by the certainty that he was playing false in some way, and yet, why? False to her, indeed? She laughed.

"Why do I care if he is treacherous and untruthful?" she mused. "What is he to me? Oh! why do I care?"



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### CHAPTER XIV.

What is the love of men that women seek it?  
In its beginning pale with cruelty,  
But having sipped of beauty, negligent  
And full of langour and distaste.

—*Marpessa.*

The peach-blossoms had disappeared in the Colbrizzi Garden, but in their stead, luxurious red roses had sprung into fragrant bloom. The fountain played gracefully in the shadows cast by the trees. The day after Mrs. Van Lennep and Signor Cenari had ridden to Mira along the Brenta was very warm.

Lady Blanchard, two Pomeranians in her lap, was seated on the marble bench opposite the fountain, while facing her was Signor Cenari in a Scheveningen chair.

"Well," he was saying, "if you do not get to London this season, it will be the very first one since you became a bride at St. George's. I can see a lot of disconsolate old young girls ready to die in earnest without Lady Blanchard's informal dances, the only ones at which they ever get partners. Veda Lanham will weep quarts of tears. Mary Fitzhugh will put her *début* off another season. She will then be twenty-three, I believe. Lady Caroline Arnesby will go to nothing. Oh, Viola, how *can* you be so cruel? I am glad, however, that we are to have your society a bit longer. It will be gayer, more amusing here, and how do those pups like the idea? Vixen is thoroughly disgusted, I am sure; but do give me some tea, Viola. I must have something."

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## *The Strength to Yield*

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"Learn patience, Paolo, and it will put you to better advantage. Here comes James now. Put the tray on the table, James, and bring some toasted *brioche*s. I do not care for this cake. Paolo, my servants never treat me with the right respect on the continent. Why do you suppose it is?"

"Oh, they're holiday making, you know. Take myself for example. What work do I accomplish in Venice? Contrast it with what I do in Rome. Think of the time I have been here with not one portrait the result."

"Oh, Paolo, dear, don't become like Sir Thomas Lawrence, a mere fashionable dandy. Please do not prostitute your art. You really ought to work. Your portraits have entirely lost their character value. The whole tone of them will degenerate; in fact, your work for the past five years has not been up to what it was before."

"But, Viola, you loved me *before*," he remarked satirically.

"Don't be absurd, Paolo. I never was quite as fond of you as I am now. Really."

"Then is that what makes you shadow me?"

"I have always given you your liberty, Paolo, you know that. I have never watched you. Why? Are you misbehaving now? Do you see me coming after you with the gun I use on the Scotch moors?"

"Evasive Viola! I'm not in the least angry. Why do you shadow me?"

"But, Paolo, I don't," she protested. "I assure you, you have more liberty than ever. By the way, aren't you completely in love with Mrs. Van Lennep? I think her adorable. I am sure your taste is abominable when it prefers my society to hers."

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"Well, dear, youth is not the only charm in the world. It would be unwise and unkind to *you* were I to tell you that she is not beautiful. As a matter of fact, I have never seen a face that impressed me more."

"But, Paolo, youth is a wonderful thing, almost as wonderful as beauty. My cousin used to say to me when she had become fat and forty, 'I would give you my face for your youth,' and she was a great beauty."

"O, Primavera! Gioventu dell' anno—  
O, Gioventu! Primavera della vita,"

recited Paolo, raising his hand and smiling. "Yes, Viola," he said, "youth is a glorious, blind, happy, stupid day. It is the time to believe in women; to have a beau ideal; to love but one! We ride at six and chase the hounds all day, enthusiastic, the red blood rushing like wildfire through our veins. We come back and dance at the hunt-ball till dawn. Then we go to bed, but not to sleep! For we dream of a pretty young girl, and the look in her eyes, the smile on her lips. Ah, youth, youth! Sometimes I feel I would give the world to be a boy again, yet I am happier now. What hurts in getting older, Viola, is disappointment, and the knowledge that man is but a feeble slave of destiny or power, not the creature of a playground where we laugh and kiss. But that is not what I came to say."

Viola put her teacup on the table, and looked questioningly at her guest.

"Tea, Paolo?"

"Thank you, no more," he replied. "Viola, if you wish to shadow me, why don't you procure a professional detective? Ventriss Jumeau *does* make blunders. She lets one know, or if not know, *feel* she is following one. Why,



even Mrs. Gunter noticed a mystery about her. Of course Mrs. Van Lennep is such a baby she *remarked* nothing," he went on with mendacity. "Ventriss sat next us, and *alone*, mind you, at the Grand Hotel, and pursued at an unreasonable nearness all the rest of the evening in a covered gondola, which is unheard of on a beautiful night. I have seen her several times in the same funereal boat. But all of this is a bore to you, for you know it. It is absurd, Viola. You are worth more than that."

Signor Cenari assumed a graceful pose, and stared at Lady Blanchard, who flushed and talked to Vixen:—

"Pup, it's miserable that this man you have lavished with affection will believe such things of you, isn't it, Vixen? Yes, that's it. You possess the rare quality of sympathy, Vix, and Paolo,—he even insults you."

"I don't insult, Viola. I only want to know your motives; they or it, singular or plural, must be rather complex."

"They are quite simplex, I assure you," laughed Lady Blanchard. "You see, Paolo, you're the only thing in the world I care for. I have loved you so long that I think you owe me some fidelity."

She covered her eyes with her hand. Vixen jumped to the ground and walked leisurely to the fountain's brink where he took a refreshing drink.

"Yes, Paolo, love drives a woman to madness. I have never gotten tired. I have loved you more as each summer came and went, though I feel no longer that emotion that made my pulses sing, my heart beat, and my cheeks to pale at sight of you. No, Paolo, believe me. It is the love a woman bears a man after years of companionship."

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"Viola, you speak as if I had been your only love. Don't try to make me think—what of young Sir Russell Drew? He was your husband's friend in the early days, was he not? You have an unretentive memory, I fear. Did you really forget you had told me of him?"

"Oh, Paolo, how cruel you are. How insufferably cruel you are. Once you were so tender, you were all a woman could have desired. Paolo, I see now my mistake in having trusted you. I am the vanquished, you are the victor. I have lost my youth and the little charm that accompanied it. You have developed into a great genius, and you look to the soft curves and bloom of two-and-twenty."

"Nineteen, to be correct, Viola," he smiled.

"How you hurt me."

There was a hardness in her eyes.

"Viola, dear, dear Viola! has my humour offended you? But in such weather as this, one *must* laugh. Listen, Viola, it is not that I have ceased loving you, but that I am treacherous and unfaithful. The romance is over. I *loved* you. How much, you yourself know. Moreover, I loved *your* soft curves and youthful bloom at two-and-twenty."

He smiled. "It might have been a little older than that. We have had our romance. It is ended,—dead. You are mourning a ruin, Viola. You say, even you, that your pulse no longer sings, that the blood in your veins no longer throbs, that your cheeks no longer pale at sight of me. Well, that in itself was love. We have evolved from it into friendship, a beautiful friendship far higher than the other, but a woman is never content with this. She clings to the last thread of her romance, tries to elongate it as it were, refuses to leave it in a man's mind as a dream of bygone stolen kisses, of a fra-

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grant perfume, a subtlety of youth, a 'scent of the roses that hangs round it still.' No, she clings and clings and clings; it has been truly said that a woman's memory is awful. If one thread breaks she grasps another, and so it goes; then if it all fails, threads and perfumes and kisses, she regards her life and all its hopes as ended. Viola, when love vanished, you should have left that sweetness for both of us which we now shall never feel. We should never even have spoken of it. Of what are you complaining? Haven't you lived, and loved, and enjoyed? How many women have? And have you not been loved in return? Yet you won't be happy with the memory of it. You must try to rehash it in a cheap way when it is gone. You won't accept the new hope of a true friendship with the man you once loved. You sentimentalize and believe yourself the heroine of a tragedy. It is self-pity. Worse than all, it is *inartistic!*

Cenari rose and walked about the garden, his hands in his pockets.

"Yes, Paolo, I know your type; it is cruel, cruel. It exacts the all a woman can give, and laughs at her after. I am sorry to have displeased you, Paolo, but I am human. I was jealous but it was only love that prompted it. Go to *her*. Spoil her life as you have spoiled mine!"

"Viola, Viola, you have misunderstood all. You are rather melodramatic."

But Lady Blanchard did not hear. She ran across the garden into the court, the Pomeranians at her heels.

Cenari took up hat and coat, made a turn of the garden, picked a rose, and left the Colbrizzi palace.



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### CHAPTER XV.

I suoi pensieri in lui dormir non ponno.  
—“*Gerusalemme Liberata*.” *Canto I. Tasso.*

One morning while Cordelia and Dorris were taking rather late coffee and rolls in the marble bath, Maria entered with a packet of letters.

“And only one in the whole lot for you, Dorris,” said her friend gaily, as she handed it over. “I hope you will read, mark, and inwardly digest your husband’s forbearance and affection.”

Dorris put the envelope, yet unopened, on the marble slab, and went on drinking her coffee. It was not until some minutes had passed and Cordelia had turned inquiringly from the perusal of her own mail, that Dorris seemed to come out of a dream.

She sighed.

“Read it for me, Cordy, that’s a dear,” she said.

Her friend eyed her curiously, and deigned no reply.

“I don’t feel like opening letters,” the girl went on, “much less like reading them. Besides, I know every word in it. I will tell you before I break the seal. Listen! He wants me to return to America at once, in summer—in summer, mind you. But he is utterly incorrigible. He is *not* coming here. His family are beginning to be very insistent. It looks bad for both of us, and particularly so for me. Now!”

She tore the letter open, and smiled cynically as she read it.

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"Just as I thought," she exclaimed, after a hasty perusal. "Harry couldn't be original, even if it would put him on the right side of the stock-market. You see I've got down one high-sounding commercial phrase *à la* dutiful wife."

"Dorris, please, for mercy's sake! stop ridiculing your husband. I am ashamed of you, and, Dorris, I will not allow it, not in my presence. It is not decent."

The girl sprang to her feet.

"*You* won't allow it. You? Indeed, and what have you to do with my affairs? Why, you're really getting as tiresome as the whole Van Lennep family."

"You must remember, Dorris," said Cordelia severely, "that it is not my fault that you should have become nearly enough related to the Van Lenneps to make the comparison odious."

"Well, you are very provoking at times; it is not that I class you with them, but imagine leaving this City Beautiful at the call"—

"Of duty, Dorris."

"*Duty*, d-u-t-y. That ugly word. It ought to be spelled with a cipher. It isn't in my vocabulary, anyway. You are eternally asking why I married Harry. As if I knew any more than you do. I might have foreseen it. But to have you going in their wake is worse than all, to have *you* getting rigid, holding middle-class ideas,—and it's been that way ever since you came. When Daddy was with us, we got on very well. But you're wearing me to a cinder, and have, ever since you came. The Van Lenneps got hold of you, and changed you in an hour. And I hate it, I tell you, I won't have it. This eternal prating will drive me mad. You used to be such a jolly girl. The

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years between us didn't count at all. You were always ready for a jest or a lark, and now all you talk about is duty and honour and wifely *fidelity*. Why, I can't even *spell* the words, I tell you!"

Cordelia looked sadly through gathering tears.

"Dorris, I am not going to make my appeal to you on the strength of my love; that would be what you call *bro-midic* with a vengeance—considering the tone you have just taken. But whether we part here and now, remember this: You are a wife, you owe something to yourself if not to your husband and to the world; and at the price of never seeing you again after this hour, I would save you from the fate of, of—something you mentioned as having been spoken of by Mr. Barker,—*calamity*."

Dorris's eyes flashed lightnings.

"For heaven's sake, give me some peace! Who is trying to make matters worse for me? Answer me that. If it is not you, who is it? You put this man Cenari before me morning, noon and night. It is not the less irritating because you do not speak his name. You are forever hinting that I am in love with him, until you have almost made me think so myself."

Cordelia felt the blood rush to her heart as she half staggered to her feet, and Dorris went on:—

"As for Mr. Barker, I wish I had never seen him, or any poky, preachy people. Why should I be bothered with that sort of thing? You go back to America; then perhaps I can sleep o' nights."

"Dorris, you are in no condition to be left alone."

"Dreadfully nervous, am I? Irresponsible? But it has been only since you came. I was all right before. And trot back now, that's a dear, and persuade Harry to



divorce me for desertion. Why not? It's your duty to put an end to my misery—*duty*, I tell you. You're really to blame for my marriage, Cordelia, because you know when I am advised *not* to do a thing, that makes me want to do it. And you knew that when you urged me to wait awhile and, and—ha, ha!"

Dorris upset her coffee-cup which smashed into a hundred fragments against the smoothness of the marble basin, as she rushed past her friend into her bedroom.

Cordelia stood tense, listening to sobs. Never since the morning of her husband's death had such anguish weighed upon her.

"And this is what beauty does for women," she thought bitterly. "No wonder men demand it in us; it makes us easy prey! Love and beauty, forsooth," her eyes wandered cynically to the Venus in the corner, "what sins you would have to answer for if you were not carved out of marble. Prayers to this goddess? Why you rise daily from the froth of the sea—you are the froth of life. See what you have done to this poor child of mine who loves and does not even know it? She is miserable, and she does not know why, but you and I know, and I can no more alter the course of this tempest which will blight the life about me than can you."

Meanwhile Dorris lay upon her couch tossing in half-wakeful dreams. Rest, rest, rest! that was it, only she couldn't make it stop. And over her floated a mirror, now reflecting her face as wizened and aged, now as grotesquely large and youthful, but with little lines gradually deepening like rivers, whose waters were her own choking tears. Then it seemed as if she were hunting for a key, to hide away this mirror, somewhere, so that prophecies

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would not make the room go round and round and round forever.

And she was talking to Cordelia, too—not asking her forgiveness but feeling it rush through her in generous gusts.

When she tried to localize her movements, she found herself putting a key into a door of a room strangely familiar. She stopped suddenly short in bewilderment. Three doors opened off the rotunda at the head of the staircase, and she stood at the center one.

Her pale face was a contortion, as she battled with the key, and the door yielded at last. She was in the room on the second floor, which had been her father's two years since. And what had brought her here? Etchings?

She was recovering enough to appreciate how ridiculous it all was—her working herself into such a state that she did not know whether she waked or slept. The musty smell of the long unused room was in her nostrils, and she hurried to throw open the windows. Then the sense of unreality returned as she looked at the dust on chair and dresser. Except for the memories that clung to it, however, it was just as she had seen it last. Was it the memories that made it seem unreal, so poignantly in contrast with what she felt to-day?

That last time in this room when she had brought in her father's breakfast,—how tender that interview had been, and what a change two years had made. There was the bed beside which she had sat, in front of which she now instinctively knelt. And she prayed—to Jehovah or to Jove? She called upon no name, but when she rose, a soft answer came—and it was peace. She walked stealthily about the room, looking earnestly at the things made

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sacred by his touch, since then locked up as in a precious casket.

She had come here for something,—ah! the etchings she had left here two summers ago. She wanted them—for what? Suddenly she remembered: it was to show Cenari.

In the room her maid Susan had occupied she found a vial grimy with dust. Had it once contained ether? She picked it up twice and set it down again; then wandered about the room on tiptoe and returned to tuck it in the folds of her gown. In the narrow passage leading to a door on the rotunda, she paused before a frame set in intaglio in the wall. She had a dim recollection of something uncanny in connection with it, and vaguely connected it with dusty bottles and secret vials. She would ask Bonti. She stepped back to close the windows, and her search for the etchings having been in vain, went out and down the stairs, feeling the chill of the marble for the first time through thin slippers.

Once in her room, the contents of the vial became an obsession. What should she do with it? She had no earthly use for it. She stepped out into the bath, and left it there, as if she had hidden a guilty fear.

Then she combed out the long tresses of her hair, read a bit in a tiresome novel, sang softly to herself, and settled herself to answer Harry's letter.

Cordelia's knock at length sounded upon her door, and Cordelia's voice was inquiring.

"I'm feeling better," was Dorris's reply, "but I don't think I'll keep that engagement. I feel more like calling upon Lady Blanchard. What are you going to do?"

"Drift, Dorris," came Cordelia's voice through the closed doorway; "drift all afternoon."



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"Then would you mind drifting to Signor Cenari's studio to let him know I'll sit to-morrow?"

"You are better, Dorris, dear, after all?" was the answer. "Of course I will do anything you say."

Dorris was received in the Colbrizzi Garden where Signor Pavolo also greeted her.

"How very, very good of you to come," was Lady Blanchard's welcome. "I really never thought you would call upon such an old lady."

"Little girls can be polite now and then, Lady Blanchard, to *very* old people."

"And both of us coming at one hour, Mrs. Van Lennep," put in Signor Pavolo, "will relieve me of the burden of discussing alone with Lady Blanchard an impossible book where a man gets the worst of it."

"And the author," demanded Dorris, "who, pray, would dare to be so true to life?"

They all laughed.

"Well, really, Mrs. Van Lennep," Lady Blanchard cried, "it is strange that the woman *always* has to pay a higher price than the man. That is one respect where fiction is usually veracious."

"Does a woman *always*, Lady Blanchard, do you think?"

"I am afraid she does."

"Well, you are safe in saying so, because one can see that experience has not blighted *you*."

Signor Pavolo shot a quick glance of astonishment from Lady Blanchard to Mrs. Van Lennep.

"Oh, I have read about it in books. Will you take a lump of sugar in your tea?" Lady Blanchard's tone was suave.

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"Lady Viola, do come to see Mrs. Gunter and me. Our palace is of a piece with dreams, and we have a garden almost as charming as this. We cannot quite keep pace with the Colbrizzi, though."

"The Spechio-Torni? Really, I should be afraid to live in it. Strange stories are centered in its history."

As Dorris left the palace, she was embarrassed by a sense of having failed—in what? Why did Signor Pavolo look so strangely over her head to Lady Blanchard more than once? Was she deficient in social grace, since this array of moods weighed upon her?

Again that night came on restlessness. She tried various aids to sleep, sheep vaulting a country-stile one after the other, one and two and three, and back again. Women who are troubled with insomnia get old and withered before their time; they lose their bloom. Susan once had told her something about drops on a handkerchief. Drops of ether? "Sprinkle them on like cologne," recurred the directions, "put it over your face and breathe deep, deep."

"But suppose I never awake?" whispered Caution. "Ah, but you will, you will," insisted Susan who was off beyond the seas.

In a moment, Dorris was sitting upright. What about the contents of the vial she had brought downstairs? Then she fell back upon her pillows. But why had she been impelled to bring that particular thing away from the rooms where her father had been? Had his spirit sent her up there? She would see.

She lighted a candle and crept toward the door, going almost eagerly into the marble bath. Her feet were cold on the stones, and the candle cast a glare upon the very corner where she had left that vial. It was not there!

She stood still, vacantly staring down into the sunken bath, the candle flare terrifying her into silence. Had she come afterward and taken it away? Cordelia never came in here after early morning.

She walked back into her room, trying to remember that she had herself taken it. It was uncanny to have it disappear like that, after she seemed to have been sent upstairs to fetch it—at least after she had acted upon the impulse to bring it from *that* room.

The desire for sleep, for some form of unconsciousness that would still the beating in her temples, quiet the anguish in her heart, murder this accusing conscience which yet had nothing with which to reproach itself—grew upon her.

What was it that had suddenly maddened her that day on horseback when she lashed the poor animal in her flight from Cenari? She was reaching upward—for help, for peace—but her arms were so tired. And there Cordelia slept so peacefully before her—in *her* bedroom! Why had she come in here? She was choking with the mustiness, strangling with the fumes of—ether! She rushed to one of the windows, and tugged at it, awakening Cordelia with her screams. The older woman sprang out of bed, and lifted the slender girl from the floor where she had fallen in a faint.



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## *The Strength to Yield*

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### CHAPTER XVI.

And who was I, to resist, withstand  
That charm of fragrant gloom?  
A summer night has a thousand powers  
Of scent and stars and bloom—  
Forgive me in that my errant hand  
Caressed your silken hair;  
Oh, lay the blame on the jasmine flowers  
You know how sweet they were.  
—*Stars of the Desert.*

The next day Cordelia and Dorris went to Paolo Cenari's studio for the girl's first sitting. At the painter's request, she brought with her the gown she had worn at Lady Blanchard's dinner. To complete the sketch begun, he seated Dorris in an old Venetian chair near the windows, reserving the effect of the gold tapestries till the time he should mix his colours. He was rather *distract*, she thought—indeed, hardly cordial. Perhaps, after all, he had not seriously thought to have her come to-day, and was annoyed. Now and then, she looked wonderingly out upon the garden, or at Cordelia.

"Pardon me, Mrs. Van Lennep," he would say at such times, "but you have quite changed your pose. May I not ask you to keep your head turned? Ah, that is better. Now we shall do nicely."

She found herself yielding with ease to his commands, though he spoke to her more than once with what seemed to her altogether unnecessary stiffness.

This went on for two hours—he commanding in a severe, professional way, and she alternately acquiescing

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and relaxing; at the conclusion of which she walked delightedly about the room upon a tour of inspection.

"Where did you get those censers?" she demanded.

Cenari merely glanced up and smiled.

"Signore, I asked you a question," she said playfully.

"And I was too absent-minded to know what it was, I presume," he returned.

"I was admiring your censers."

"The censers? Oh, yes! They were given to me in Damascus long, long ago when I was a year or two older than you, perhaps. Have pity on my years, and don't force me into detail."

"But the torches and that splendid tiger-skin."

Cenari was busy screening a canvas.

"Signore, please tell me about the torches and the tiger-skin. It looks like that other Paul's original!"

"What is that?" He was coming toward her. "Oh, yes! The torches were here in the palace when I came and have been for centuries. The tiger was shot by Prince Borni of Rome against whose ancestress you have something of a grudge. Rather fine, is it not? I have been offered ten thousand *lire* for it time and time again, which peculiarly enhances its beauty. Is it not so?"

"Anyway, I wouldn't mind having it—if I were sure I could get ten thousand *lire* or not."

"It is yours, signora."

"You are very kind to suppose I would accept such gifts, Signor Cenari."

He turned.

"Kind?" he echoed.

"Kind to me, I mean, to be so absurd as to suppose I would take it."

"It was offered only in jest, signora," he said, and turned to busy himself in the room.

Dorris caught her breath.

His indifference was certainly novel in her experience of men, and it piqued her; besides, it was a contradiction of his previous manner to her, which was, to say the least, puzzling.

"Come, Cordelia," she cried swinging about, "I must change my gown before we go, and fear we have lingered too long already for the signore's comfort."

She met Cenari's glance as she passed into the adjoining room, and it was brimful of friendly salute, nothing more. She bit her lip when she was alone with Cordelia. It seemed that the whole day was spoiled.

When they were leaving the studio, Cordelia invited the artist to dine with them at seven.

"Thank you. I am so very sorry," he said. "The good things always come too late. I have accepted an invitation elsewhere. But perhaps I may be permitted to call a little later?"

"Very well; we shall expect you. Come to the garden-gate, and Mrs. Van Lennep and Felno will serenade you. Our gondolier plays very well, by the way. Good afternoon."

He held the velvet curtain aside as they passed out.

"Cordelia, in the name of nonsense—what did you say that for?" whispered Dorris a moment later. "He will think we are making fun of him."

"Well, he deserves to think so, doesn't he?" said her friend curtly as they got into their boat.

"Cordelia," said the girl, "what a tragic aspect Venice wears when rain threatens. She seems like an old and



faded woman in the early morning without the aid of jewels and paint, for the sun does hide the wrinkles of years, in this case."

"Her girdles are worn and her laurels faded," sighed Cordelia, "and moreover I hope Cenari gets caught in the rain."

When Dorris reached the Torni steps she was seized with an inspiration. "I'll see if there's any mail, Cordelia. No one has inquired to-day." She stepped into the gondola and ordered Felno to row to the Piazza, but as soon as they lost sight of Torni, they took a roundabout route among the lesser canals to Casa Bonti in the Via Malferine, where lived the agent for the palace. Once there, she entered Bonti's office, and he was speedily summoned.

"Signor Bonti, I sent my maid to you yesterday with the key to the second story of the Palazzo Specchio-Torni. I should like to ask for it again, for I have forgotten something. But I will not keep it so long this time, Signor Bonti. You know it fell into my hands by mistake before."

Bonti remembered her father, and concluding that she had visited the vacant rooms from motives of sentiment, beamed in sympathy upon her as he complied with her request.

"Has Signor Bonti rented the rest of the palazzo?" she asked, on receiving the key.

"Not as yet—but he lives in hopes."

"But you are succeeding this summer with your houses in general, I hope."

"Oh, madame, it is the same as ever, neither more nor less."

He escorted her with old-world courtesy to her gondola, and soon she was on the way to the Piazza for her

mail. There was none, as indeed she had anticipated. She would hasten home now. As she walked back to her boat, she thought she saw Cenari in the shadow, and unconsciously slackened her pace. But the footsteps died away. Again, she imagined that he passed her in another gondola as she neared Torni. She brought herself up with a sudden sense of laughter. There was no reason why she should see the painter in every man she met. It was absurd.

She found Cordelia ready for tea in the ball-room; the reception-rooms were rarely used.

"Absolutely no mail, Cordelia," Dorris said, kissing her. "We're not popular, you see."

"Come, Dorris, help me with this difficult Italian of d'Annunzio after we have chatted a bit. Have you read it?"

"I suppose I have, but I didn't know his books or poems were scattered about here."

"This 'Triumph of Death' I found in the cabinet. Isn't that a find?"

"He has a wonderful sense of beauty, Cordelia, but he is morbid and cruel."

"Speaking of cruelty, Dorris"—

"Yes. Cenari—what?"

Cordelia smiled in spite of herself.

"He has traveled the world over and has known every one worth knowing, and still has painted the most celebrated beauties of the time. How do you suppose he has managed it?"

"I have wondered, but imagine there is a simple enough explanation. He has lived intensely—felt the sun burn him in the East and the snows freeze him in the North"—

"And women chase him in the West," supplemented her friend with childlike innocence.

Dorris did not seem to hear.

"You see," she continued, "he is forever on the *qui vive* for knowledge, and then he hands it about with such an air of blandness. He has what Shaw calls, 'a capacity for experience.' And somehow, one feels that his memory must be remarkable. To be pedantic, he illustrates Aristotle's 'acquired idea' to me, rather than the innate of Plato. In his mind, one feels that impressions are stored as in a phonograph. I mean impressions that he receives never really fade. Do you know what I mean?"

"Not precisely, Dorris. Your psychology is a little mixed up with *Paolology*. But I see your point of view, and that is what you want, isn't it?"

Cordelia looked at Dorris caressingly as she spoke.

"Let us run along and dress, girly," she added.

They left the room arm in arm, and both indulged in a little nap before dressing for dinner.

After they had finished dinner and were seated in the ball-room, Cordelia complained of headache and nerves. "I wonder if you'd mind if I dropped into bed a little after Cenari comes, Dorris, for I am simply dead. Would it be terribly rude?" she asked.

"No, dear, not a bit if you are not well. Poor, dear Cordelia," Dorris stroked her hair. "Run along if you wish."

"No—I'll wait until then; it is better."

Cordelia in desperation had arranged a plan of campaign. Possibly she might achieve success—influence Dorris as she had done in other days, by skilled tactics—tactics having a strict and logical relation to the girl's psycholog-



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ical state. If one had the self-control to get into sympathy with absolutely alien emotions—the love, to sift another's point of view—surely, then, the restless, turbulent spirit she would influence, might become as clay in the potter's hands.

After Cenari came, however, Cordelia felt the curb of Dorris's restlessness. She could not settle herself to read, to doze; rather she lay upon her couch staring blankly at the candles and at the shadows they cast upon the floor.

And, meantime, Cenari was looking at Dorris across the piano. "You won't sing for me?" he asked. "No? Then come into the garden. The weather-god seems to favour the evenings we spend together. Just come and look."

He led the way into the balcony overlooking the garden, from which a faint, earthy smell arose to them. The half moon cast the shadow of the near-by palace far into the garden—and a fresh breeze was coming in from the Adriatic.

"Yes, I will go out, Signor Cenari. Wait till I get a wrap."

She left him by the window looking absently down the Grand Canal, and inhaling the fragrant perfume of the summer night. They walked out a moment later, instinctively seeking the seat in the garden's shadow, regardless of the fact that it was dampened by the evening mist; nor did either apparently feel the penetrating chill of the wind from the sea.

Suddenly her whole being seemed to respond to the mere consciousness of his presence, and she was answering the slight pressure of his hand in the half light. Then

something seemed to annihilate the intervening space, and Cenari was whispering:—

“Dear lips, soft and red, give them to me—to me! I have wanted them so long.”

Lured on by the tenderness awakening within her, by the honey of romance, by the multiform arts which transform weakness into poetry, she was blind—until an abrupt transition admitted a ray of light and let in fury with it.

“How dare you—how dare you?” she flashed out at him, while before her eyes stretched out a long and imposing line of princessly Roman ladies, the tips of whose fingers this presumptuous Italian would scarcely have dared to kiss. “Because I have trusted you—have come here with you, you take the first opportunity to insult me—as you would insult a hair-brained grisette at whom you had tossed a *lira*. Because my husband is not in Italy, because you fancy me powerless, because, forsooth, the American woman has not the keen scent for propriety of your high-born dames, you take this advantage. A thousand years of pageantry does not call on pride, perhaps—but it should on honour—which *you* do not even know. I am proud of my country as I never was before.”

“Pardon, *Marchesa*,” said Cenari with mock humility, “I know that no American would ever kiss a lady in a shadow!”

Dorris glared at him.

“Is this all, signora,” he went on, his voice melting with glib celerity into sadness. “You answered my slight touch upon your hand. I dared to think—but I know now it was madness. But I thought,—you might—oh! let it pass. I will offend no more.”

“Might what?” she demanded.

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"Might have cared, signora."

"Cared? For you!"

"Hardly *that*. My thoughts have not such flight; but I might have thought you cared—enough to kiss me in this light."

"Signore!"

He smiled.

"Is it so wrong, my *Puritana*?" were the words that came to her like music, as they stood looking into each other's eyes. "Why? And why—and why?"

Then Wonderland opened out before her—there was a sudden breaking up of the structure of family pride, of womanly dignity; and her arms went out in the darkness.

"Paolo, kiss me," she murmured in a voice that trembled, as lip sought lip.

Then suddenly as he released her, a sob broke from her, and she vanished. But in that kiss she had seen the path that women tread.



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### CHAPTER XVII.

I thought we slept on the desert sands  
Where the old date-gardens lie,  
And a golden mist of quivering stars  
Was scattered across the sky.

—*Stars of the Desert.*

Dorris crept in silence to her room, and then threw herself face downward upon her bed. Still fresh upon her lips was her first kiss of love, and through her a torrent of emotion was rushing in wild phantasmagoria, transforming all her habits of thought.

So the wonderful experience had come to her, that illuminating view which she would fain have shut out, that voice of the inevitable, calling down three generations of her blood. But why had they shut the sweetness out in death,—her mother, and the mother of that mother? As the force of it gripped her in the garden, fear had not entered in, and of this had she not given evidence to herself and to him in a burning kiss? But now their steps were on the pavement and coming up the staircase and echoing through the marble halls, the steps of those dead women whose blood was still her own. The blood beating in her temples, hammering around her heart, fevering her cheeks, was *their* blood, singing and accusing—though stunched in the tomb.

It was the City of Temptations—D'Annunzio was right. She opened the window and leaned out, and it slept as those women of her race beyond the sea—in death, both of them. But the smile of decaying marble was pointing backward to the city's pride and glory; and

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the anguish in her blood, to the sorrows of her race. And the city itself rising from its moving waters, was laughing at her—just as her blood laughed! Yet its history was a stately poem in the soft metre of love!

A gondola passed as she stepped into the balcony, and strains of music and laughter were wafted up to her.

"They can be happy, but I can never be," she thought. "Here I stand a prisoner in my chains. Why should they be free? I did not choose my lot. I did not choose to fight against this mania! They out there have none to fight against."

She knew at last what she had done against herself in marriage; why, for the very fear of life and its meaning, ardent maidens became saints, and saints courtesans; why reckless women drained the cup to its lees, and paid the price of shame in blood; why gentle wives forgot in infamous selfishness the name they had sworn to life-long honour!

Yet the whole world seemed sweeter for the knowledge that she bore. The undreamed-of thing had come to Dorris Bedford, and it should give her something that she craved, were it only the shadow of the shadow of Love. The very air seemed sweeter for the dream which could never be realized, for the will-o'-the-wisp she was chasing this night. Poor Cordelia, who understood so well, had seen this shadow pausing to take breath before it overtook her, this night of the thousand voices.

She stood looking upon her sleeping friend tenderly before she adjusted the down quilt about her, closed the window, and left a soft kiss upon her cheek.

Soon, beneath the heavy damask rose of her own bed-curtains, lay a sleepless woman, pursued by phantoms

which seemed never to overtake, yet in the effort, leaped and raced and capered; then there was the rushing as of the sea in her ears. She jumped up and paced the floor, stumbling against a chair with a cry of pain at last, and sinking down against the dresser, to think, forsooth, to think!

"Fight, Dorris, fight!" that phantom was crowing. "Get the key, unlock the dresser. It will lead you to *ether* and dreams. And then you will not be Dorris Bedford, the daughter of an honoured father, fighting for the sake of a name, but a nymph, free as the wind and as tameless, subject to no law!"

Then again,—“Only a drop or two, just enough to drown this pain. You are afraid, Dorris, to fight the battle alone. You are afraid to face your newly awakened womanhood! You are a coward. Why is it any worse for you to suffer than for others? And no one was ever so full of pain. You are afraid of those cold, marble stairs, and that room where your father slept, and that the bottle of ether may not be there. Cordelia has seen it all—the battle that is raging in your heart,—the ether that you would seek to drown it. She is wise beyond women, Dorris, she can see into your soul.”

Dorris shivered, and crawled round in front of the dresser, then sought to unlock a drawer. Fear unnerved her. She lighted a candle and started out through the passageway into the ball-room. Then shadows flickered in her way, and she thought she heard steps stealthily behind her. She dared not turn her head. When on the marble of the ancient staircase, spectres accompanied her, racing up and down,—the spectres of the lost souls who had died in the Spechio-Torni in ghostly centuries



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which she shuddered to recall. Why could they not stay in their sumptuous tombs, and leave her to her own torment?

And this fear was new to her. Never as a child had she trembled in the dark. She would brave it, she would run up the remaining steps, and burst into that room. Once on the landing, she paused and gripped her throat. Then she placed the candle before her on the floor, and fought, as before, to unlock the heavy central door. The old oak, yielding to her pressure, made an unearthly sound in the late silence of the sleeping palace. She entered the bedroom without hesitation and held the candle aloft, braving whatever might lurk in the spaces between the shadows. The thing she was in search of, the lure for those twenty thousand devils dancing as before St. Anthony on a needle's point, was contained in—ether!

But she could not find the bottle which she had taken away before, and which had disappeared from the sunken bath where she had left it for an hour or two. At last she became tired of searching, and threw open the window, leaning out into the night. She caught the fragrance of the jessamine shrubs from the garden, and inhaled it in long, deep breaths, closing her eyes the while and dreaming that she was on an oasis in a desert laden with musk.

Of what use was this prosaic life with its foolish conventions, its senseless routine, its hypocrisy, its back-biting, its lopsided morality, when the world was so beautiful, the hidden part of it, which these false-visioned people shut out?

"Why shouldn't I be drifting in a gondola with him by my side this moment? Why should I shut myself up within these walls on a night I cannot sleep? And

in Venice, too, where the very stones breathe the mysteries of the centuries, and cry with the voices of the dead. If death were a long, delicious sleep,—and I might dream of him! Francesca da Rimini, condemned to float through eternity in *her* Paolo's arms—did Dante call *that* punishment?" She laughed. Why, Dorris would be content with misery if it would mean *him*, to be blind if she could but feel his presence. It was the one thing she cared to live for. Paolo, Paolo, Paolo! His face was framed in all these palaces, his presence lingered in the garden walks.

She closed the window again and passed into the corridor, when something rolled before her as she stepped. It was the ether. She stooped down and seized it, and without waiting to close the door fled quickly down the staircase. The force that drove her was as strong as the tremulous fear of a few moments before. It was a satisfaction to gain her room at last, clutching securely the thing she had conquered her fears to get.

"Visions of happiness and peace—or nightmares," she soliloquized. "Who knows the mystery that these few drops may tangle into my sleep—a mystery upon a mystery—and here I stand pleading for it, preferring dreams to rest? Ah, well!"

Of what use was it to fight against a temptation to which in the end she must yield? What a waste of effort! Only the intense longing to be at rest, the longing without the power, suggested the striking of that hour her mother had known,—the annihilation of this painful consciousness.

She blew out the candle and crept into bed, fatigued at last with her effort. She felt over the quilt, across the sheet up to the pillow and toward her throat.

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Then she uncorked the ether, gathered up the filmy handkerchief which she saturated with it, and sitting upright in the bed, suddenly found herself drifting slowly out with Paolo upon a painted sea!

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They were struggling on across hot sands, the thirst parching their very souls, the blood rushing from wounds in their feet, and the hot air and endless search stifling their breath. Hand in hand, they tramped with low moans, further on into the hideous glare which might as well have been darkness.

Poisonous spiders stung their naked arms, their sandaled feet, but there seemed no turning back. He held her hand and whispered that yonder brightness which they had ever been approaching was not a mirage; and the sweetness of his message would make all time dear to her—on that oasis which held the city on the sands!

The heat grew on apace, as if belched forth upon them, and no caravan crossed their pathway, and the cup of water was the dream of Paradise. What was it, the magic of quenched thirst? Romance knew it. Life had left it far behind.

But still she walked with him whose words, though fainter and fainter and dying gradually into echoes, were her all. And their eyes strained out together to search still for that city. But dunes of sand rose cruelly in the foreground, obscuring the mirage, deadening the hope.

At last the aching ceased, the burning glare was riven, and the city was before them; but it had fallen, and she lifted eyes to darkness and despair—then glory. It was



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the joy of his presence, the yearning for his touch, still in the midst of ruin. Then she staggered forward and knew no more.

When she awoke, it was to feel the cool softness of the sands, and of his devouring eyes and lips. She stretched out her arms to hold him, but he was not there. At least, it seemed she did but grasp the tip-ends of his fingers which were slipping away. Still, she heard his voice and felt his kiss. Illusion! Like the costliest perfume, like the rarest things of life—beyond the reach, far away, as the pressure of his mouth. And she was alone, alone, alone, in the abomination of desolation upon the sands! Still, they were cooling, which was strange for sands under a parching light, and the sense of peace which was pervading her whole being, might be the gentle voice of night.

What was the blue-black, purple-blue, lavender-black haze? What colour was it? Of what substance was it? Shimmering with myriads of spangles that disc hung overhead where thousands of eyes sparkled down at her. She studied their shapes. One of them was embroidered like the Southern Cross. She laughed in her joy, and lifted her tired body on an elbow. The disc was not an embroidered pattern—it was the night sky. Oh, God! it was the Southern Cross! It was the first time she had seen it staring at her from Heaven, this emblem of all faith. She breathed the faint perfume of the Eastern night, and of rose-petals, rising like incense from a distant altar.

The ineffable sweetness and languor of it all answered the passionate yearning of her soul. And once more, it was to know he was with her, he who could transform like a god!

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She forgot her tired limbs, her aching and bleeding feet, since he was near her, since his strong arms held her close; since, it seemed, that she could answer to some call from his great strength, since to her had been given the gift of answering the soul in him! But she waited, and listened—waited at the call of her vanity, listened for the approval of the world. And he had gone.

Loneliness, then, brought back to her all the pain of her journeying, and the awakened senses hurt. There, there, there! At last, in the clear distance arose the fairy city, like an answer to her hope. Its palms swayed in the breeze, its minarets saluted the stars. The mosque! The mosque, with its round, golden dome was a sentinel, and through her rang the lines:—

“Dim in the East, the ruined city lies,  
Purple against the paler purple skies,  
And slender palms and minarets arise  
Into the night.”

It was, indeed, the City of Allah! She was so near, so near—could she ever partake, live in, be part of its Hindu beauty, sit like a daughter, reverent, beneath the slender palms, kneel in its holy mosque?

“What care I,” she thought, “if I never reach the flowers, the incense, the oasis? What care I, for I have seen an Eastern night on the desert sands, have felt its wonder, breathed its perfume. But that is as nothing, nothing, for I have felt—the touch of his lips on my mouth.”

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### CHAPTER XVIII.

Ah, but his lightest kiss was more sweet to me  
Than any caress of thine, O silver sea!  
His arms have held me gentler e'en than thou  
In thy liquid green embraces hold'st me now.  
—*Laurence Hope.*

The sun rose and bathed the city a beautiful gold. Not a breath of wind stirred the tree-tops in the garden. As Cordelia opened her window wide and looked down the canal, she felt the warm promise of the day. She liked midsummer weather, always feeling a sense of loss if the place of her abode furnished cool days in July!

When she went in to awaken Dorris, she found the girl lying with the gold of her loosened hair covering her shoulders and hiding her night-dress, and even a loose strand following the curve of the arm which hung over the side of the bed.

Cordelia waited there a moment before her gaze was arrested by the uncorked bottle on the floor. Then smothering a scream, she rushed upon the sleeping girl.

To her relief the tired head of Dorris turned on the pillow, and the red lips parted, but there was a lack-lustre look in the half-opened eyes.

"Dorris, Dorris! Speak to me! What *have* you done?"

Dorris's eyes were speaking now.

"Good morning, Cordelia. What is the matter?"

"Dorris, that bottle—what were you doing with it?"

"What was *I* doing with it? *I* didn't buy it. Some



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one got it to clean a dress with, when I was in Venice with my father."

"Who? What do you mean? Stop laughing Dorris."

"I'm not laughing. Susan bought it, I believe; and I was looking around upstairs one morning, and ran across it."

"Is that all?"

"Well, not exactly. But I have slept pretty badly lately, so I sprinkled a few drops on my *mouchoir*. Now, don't hide it again. Where is it?"

She raised herself on an elbow and fumbled for the lace handkerchief. "Here it is. There, I put it over my face, so—and I fell into the most exquisite sleep and dreamed such a wonderful dream."

"It's a wonder you didn't die, child," said the frightened Cordelia, pinching the tips of the girl's fingers to be sure she was herself awake and that Dorris would cry out and corroborate the evidence. "Dorris Bedford, I never in my life heard of such a thing. What put *ether* into your head? It's a wonder the fumes," she held her nose, "didn't kill you in your sleep."

Then she walked across the room and opened the windows.

Dorris laughed.

"Now, Cordelia, I suppose you are going to try to make me believe that you noticed 'a strange, pungent smell' when you came in, for you just know you didn't. Don't try to make me think so." She leaned out of bed and pointed a finger at Cordelia. "For shame, for shame, for shame! Ah, I have it now! Did you think"—she lay back upon the pillows and laughed; "you didn't think I was going to end it all, did you, without saying—

good-bye to you?" The girl's voice sunk into a whisper. "Is that why you took the bottle out of the sunken bath that day? Well, rest assured that the contents of it are hardly strong enough to put me to sleep, permanently. Why, even corked up as it was, half of it has evaporated since it was opened last. I took it to kill desperate insomnia. I'm a wreck when I can't sleep. Cordelia, it's no use hiding it again, for if you do I shall go straight to a doctor to get something worse, to ease my feverish, nervous condition—the condition I have been in lately. If you doubt it, listen to what I did to get it. I went up in the night, alone, through those spooky rooms for it. Oh, don't scold me, Cordelia, please don't! I have never known such terror as that which gripped me last night. But I conquered it, and went up there, all alone!"

Cordelia sitting on the edge of the bed, looked sorrowfully into the lovely, smiling eyes.

"Dorris, dear," she said, "I'm going to speak plainly. It may be imagination, but I am so afraid this desire you have to put yourself to sleep in an unnatural way, is only the beginning of that other. And, Dorris, it grips my heart in horror."

Cordelia's face was troubled, and pity dawned in Dorris's eyes.

"Don't be absurd, Cordy," she said, pressing her friend's hand. "Oh, *don't* be absurd! I have no desire to do that unspeakable thing. *End myself forever?* Why, Cordelia, even if I did want to, I'm too much of a coward. It is only nervous irritability that gets me—gets me, I tell you—when I need rest. I cannot make you understand, but it pushes me on and on. Sometimes I want to reach something, and I can't. I want to

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scream, and I can't. It is as if I were hanging and writhing about, and couldn't"—

"How often have you felt this? It is more than once or twice, certainly. Once I found you in a faint in my room by the window. You said you had not screamed, but it was your screams that awakened me, Dorris. And as I look back, I feel sure that a great deal of your mother's trouble began with sleeplessness. It may *all* have been due to that. Why, I can't let you continue. You would want more and more each time. If you couldn't have it, you would pass ever darker and darker hours. Each time of yielding would be succeeded by deeper suffering, and the dreams you have would progress in sweetness,—the sweetness that lures to ruin. You would want to reach something, and to reach it, you must take the all—you would sometime take enough to die. Dorris, I have read medical works and talked to men of science on this very subject. The person who develops insanity—the mania for self-destruction begins as you have begun. I tell you because I want to"—

"Scare me, yes!" Dorris breathed, yet she looked very grave. "Are you telling me the truth, Cordelia?" she finally gasped. "How horrible you make it—the beginning that seemed so sweet. I did want to reach something,—was mad to reach it. What you say is true, but what can I do? When one of those compelling moods comes over me, I am held."

"But when did you feel it first?"

"When I rode to Mira. I galloped the horse till his sides were streaked with foam and blood, and he nearly threw me. If it hadn't been for Cenari"—



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"Let's forget Cenari. Be more with me. And whenever you feel one of these spells coming on, tell me. Suppose we consult Dr. Ruberto? He is in Rome now."

"Thank you; I decline to be experimented with."

"But, Dorris—"

"I will not, I tell you," rising up in bed; "it will make me stronger in the end. I will take something to make me sleep. How can I live if I don't sleep? I will see the doctor for that. Why, Cordelia, when that thing grips me, I feel that I shall die if I don't get somewhere. It is awful—myself rising against myself like that. It is awful!"

"Let me sleep in here with you, then," coaxed Cordelia, afraid to counsel leaving Venice altogether to get a change of scene. "I will get some bromide to help out."

"You are a bromide yourself," laughed Dorris, "but suppose we talk of merrier things. The day will be hot. I am going to the Lido for a swim. Will you come along, dear? Do! And we can lunch in that little arbor of a café. Do you remember it? Just you, Cordelia, and I. And we will sit on the sands and watch the lateen sails along the horizon. What do you say?"

The girl was moving about the room making ready to dress.

"It is luxuriously warm, Cordelia, isn't it? and oo-ooh! won't the Adriatic be cool and fresh?"

"You go over with Maria for the swim, Dorris, while I go to market. The servants can't do as well, you know. You remember last night's dinner? Then I'll come to fetch you at the baths, and we will have your deliciously planned luncheon. *Al fresco* meals are always delightful,

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and it doesn't matter at all when one gobbles a fly or a marine animal on the side."

Dorris joined in her friend's laughter.

"These are tables, even if they are *al fresco*! You run along, Cordy, now, and get yourself dressed. We're up ahead of Maria, but I don't want any breakfast anyway, and I hope you don't."

Dorris decked herself in spotless white linen and a large flowered hat, the dainty pink of whose blossoms enhanced her white skin. It was not long, indeed, before she was gliding with Maria down the canal for the lagoon, her bathing costume in a neat parcel in one end of the gondola. Felno had a quick stroke and even without the aid of a current they made excellent time.

On reaching the Lido, they walked across the island to the baths, and it was a matter of a very short time before Dorris, in readiness for the water, was walking down the steps and touching the soft sands of the beach. She waited a moment, playing with the tiny ripples from the Adriatic curling over her bare feet, while Maria looked at her in admiration. And, indeed, she was a picture in the sunshine, her slender figure delicately curved in the black silk, and her gold hair bright under the red handkerchief. She ran the length of the beach, and Maria's eyes were still upon her as she waded into the water. There were few bathers, and she did not heed any.

To herself, meanwhile, it seemed as if she would never get into deeper water as she walked on, her feet caressing the soft sands beneath them. Gradually the water was reaching her waist. The cool contact refreshed her, and she gave herself up to the sea, beginning a steady breast stroke. He who has bathed in Adriatic waters off the

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Lido knows well their shallow nature; and while Dorris was breathing in the pure air of the cloudless day as she swam onward, her attention was arrested by a red and yellow sail far out on the sea. Its reflection in the water fascinated her, and seemed literally to hold her eyes as she went steadily toward it.

"Ah," she thought, "this coolness of the ocean on such a day makes one feel it is good to be alive," and she recalled her dream of the desert which wound itself up deliciously with the reality of the lateen sail—and the one face which seemed to be ever before her. On, on she went reluctantly.

Then suddenly it seemed as if the red and yellow sail were coming nearer. Her arms were growing tired, the muscles of her legs stiff. Then she tried to see if she could touch bottom; her head went under, in her endeavor. She came up again with a remembrance of where she had been before she sank. She turned her course under an impulse of desperation, and looked. Far, far away—almost as far as she had seen the city rising in the desert—she saw the silver sands of the beach and a small house. Had she been asleep in the ocean? That little house was the pavilion, and she must be very, very far out. And it seemed as if she had not the strength to reach shallow water, to stand up in the sea!

The tide was going out, and with it, a strong current as partner. That was why she had floated so dreamily through the waters. That was why the lateen sail had come closer. She had neared *it*; and thinking of him all the time, so unceasingly that all sense of danger was shut out. With each frantic effort to swim *in*, she knew quite well, that she was being carried, ever so little, *out*,



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Far in the distance she distinguished something coming toward her. A swimmer? How could she suppose help would come, since she had gone so far alone, leaving poor Maria—where? She could not think, and at last gave up the struggle, as in one gulping cry, her body moved slowly backward until—until she floated. Her hands clasped her head as she rested her gaze on the blue sky above, then on the receding Lido, and knew that the swimmer with swift, sure strokes was gaining on her. For a moment he disappeared, and she closed her eyes, abandoning her passive limbs to the tide, and revelling in the exquisite coolness of Adria's waters.

"Dorris, Dorris!" she heard precisely as it had come to her upon the desert, and it seemed to her as if it conquered death, "it is Leander."

"Paolo," she murmured, "oh, Paolo!"

"Hush, don't speak," he commanded, "do as I bid you now. Never mind about *why* you swam so far. Put your arm on my shoulder—and help me a little. They have a boat from shore. It will be only a moment, dear."

She touched him ever so lightly and felt him carry her forward, his powerful strokes troubling the water as he cleft it in twain to make their path. On they went towards the little white strip of beach far away, which she had been trying so long to reach. And the house on the beach was growing bigger on the sands, and she was happier than she ever remembered to have been—happier than in that dream which she had risked her life to have. She tightened her grip, and put an arm about his neck.

They went under together.

"We cannot lose time," he resisted. "Help—the boat is coming."

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But she was not conscious of obeying, or of refusing to obey. She only knew his strong arm was ploughing through the water, and that her mouth was filling. It didn't matter. He was stern and cross, and stupidly in earnest; but he had strength!

The dory loomed up before them. Dorris gave a faint cry and knew no more.

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### CHAPTER XIX.

O Hair of gold! O Crimson Lips! O Face  
Made for the luring and the love of man!  
—*Queen Henrietta Maria.*

Dorris opened her eyes to find herself lying in the bottom of the boat, her head propped against the stern seat. Slowly she remembered what had occurred. Two Italians were rowing fast, and they were now nearing the beach. Cenari, seated opposite her, smiled as he saw she had recovered.

"It was a little too much for you," he explained. "You must have wonderful endurance to have swum as far as you did. Can I do anything for you now? I have no smelling-salts or stimulants."

She looked at him questioningly.

"I would never take smelling-salts. You should know me better than that. What happened? Did I faint?"

"Just as the boat was nearing us. Had it happened sooner we would both have drowned. It was wonderful to see you floating out there. It was more wonderful to feel your gentle touch on my arm. Then—do you remember? you tightened it. Poor child, you must have been so fatigued. Yes, you tightened, and we went under the water."

They were speaking low, in English.

"Don't call me 'child,' Signor Cenari, don't! It is not like you. Call me Dorris. I loved it so—to feel it was your strength that was saving my life. You are strong. I struggled against that unkind current, but could do noth-



ing. How did it come to pass that it was you. That is the marvel of it!"

"I saw a tall, slender girl rush into the sea, and I followed—forgive! I followed. Then I stood and watched you swim. You swam so far. At last I grew worried about you, and ran back to the beach to call a boat. I preceded it and you know the rest."

"Out there, you called yourself,—Leander. Am I your Hero, then? And would you have swum across the Hellespont for my caress?" asked Dorris.

"Do you mean in bleak December, or glorious mid-summer?"

"I mean at any time. Would you swim from Abydos to Sextos to feel 'my gentle pressure on your arm'?"

"Why," he replied, "I would even swim from Scylla to Charybdis, for the very sight of those lips of yours—Yes, I would be a Leander—but then, reflect! One needn't go to the Bosphorus; no, nor half that far to be a *Hero*!"

Dorris laughed at his pun. Then her eyes sought his own smiling ones, as she said, "*Leander* died for Hero, or rather in his efforts to see her. *You* have saved my life!"

"That would be a sentimental way of regarding it. Your life would have been saved at any cost, whether I had been indulging in a swim or not. Fate sent me to you this morning. If I have been of any assistance whatever, I cannot tell you what bitter-sweet pleasure it gives me."

"Ah! don't say that," she said sweetly, "not bitter-sweet. See, here we are! Let us jump out and walk back to the pavilion. I'm not tired now. Cordelia—did she know I fainted?"

"Mrs. Gunter?" he asked. "I am sure she was neither on the beach, nor at the tables when I left. Perhaps now"—

The rowers stopped, and Dorris and Paolo sprang from the boat into knee-deep water. A small crowd had gathered to witness the end of the excitement. It annoyed Dorris that they should stare at her as she walked to the bathing house. Maria ran tremblingly to her.

"Has Mrs. Gunter been here, Maria?" she asked.

"No, no, I have not seen her," the maid answered timidly. "Are you well? I was so"—

"That will do, Maria. Remember, Mrs. Gunter is to hear nothing of this. I will reward you with a present if you remain close-mouthed."

"Certainly, signora, certainly."

"Now run away, Maria, I will dress myself."

Dorris was very slow about dressing. She sat on the narrow bench in her little bath-house, and thought. *He* had saved her, was all she could hear. Her senses were deaf to another sound, another breath. How strong he was, how manly! He had saved her. Was it Fate? Is that why she had drifted in such calm unconcern? Had Nemesis arranged this, to tempt her growing love for him, on—and on? Did she love him? Or was it July madness that came to her in the sea-city with its background for picturesque romance? She felt the blood warm in her cheeks at the thought of the kiss she had demanded the night before among the Spechio-Torni shrubs. She felt it cool as she saw his outstretched arms in the Adriatic.

Her reverie was interrupted by a loud knocking on the door. "Dorris, Dorris, you are late," said Cordelia reprimandingly.

"Yes, Cordelia," she replied, "and I'm nowhere nearly dressed. Sit down on the sands and wait. I'll hurry now I know you're here."

It was only five minutes after, that she left the stuffy bath-house for the heat of the silver sands. She greeted Cordelia with a merry laugh.

"Oh, what a swim I have had—went out ever so far. The water was delightfully refreshing. I'm in love with the Adriatic, do you know it?"

"No, Dorris, but I know it's half-past one, and, unromantic as it may seem, I *am* hungry. Take me to your out-of-door restaurant at once."

They sent Maria back in the gondola with Dorris's bathing-suit, and asked her to send Felno for them in an hour. Then they linked arms and walked half way across the Lido to the little café of Dorris's selection. She was wondering *where* Cenari would be. Would she see him—ever see him? She wanted so much to be with him now, to sit under the trees at a table with him. But she was with Cordelia, and Cordelia who had always delighted her, now bored. Her low voice sounded harsh. It was not an Italian voice, she reflected. Perhaps, though, Cenari would pass. Would he bow? or would he stop to chat with them? She was sure he would merely bow.

They were the only occupants of the café, and they were seated at a corner table in the shade of the overhanging branches of the trees. Cordelia looked at Dorris and laughed.

"Do you know, Dorris, I am going to have some *Saint Marceaux* here. Oh, I have been to this dainty place before! I had *Saint Marceaux* here then, but let us have it now. What do you say?"



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"Very well. After so long a swim, a good brand of champagne will not be disagreeable. Of course we shall have some."

A waiter took their order, and they lapsed into silence. Dorris was watching a bird in one of the trees. Her attention was arrested by a step on the gravel-path. Her heart beat wildly. Cordelia turned and remarked somewhat dryly:

"We are not the only late-comers. There is Signor Cenari."

Dorris looked at him. He seated himself at a table near the entrance and took a folded newspaper from his pocket.

After some minutes' absent perusal of its contents, he looked up, saw the ladies and bowed. But he made no attempt to join them. Cordelia rose and walked over to him.

"Silly, silly," she said, "we are the only people here; why don't you join us?"

"*Ho sempre amato la vita solitaria*," he replied, as he left his table and accompanied her to the other.

"Don't fib," said Cordelia, "Dorris, what do you think Signor Cenari just said to me?"

"I can't imagine—unless he told you that he followed us."

"No, not even that! He said he has always loved a solitary life."

"Of course," said Dorris, "that's quite clear. You see he's a confirmed bachelor. I think his mother must have prophesied it when he was quite a baby."

"Well, Mrs. Van Lennep," was his gay response, "if you happen to know any young lady between the ages of

eighteen and thirty—or, rather, twenty-eight, let me be presented to her. I assure you they would all turn me down.”

“Then,” put in Cordelia, “I am beyond the pale. Alas, and my hairs are still brown. See, Signor Cenari, they have not even begun to turn.”

Their conversation was interrupted by the waiter who placed the broiled chicken and *Saint Marceaux* upon the table.

“Ah!” and Cenari’s eyes opened, “a very excellent brand. If that was your selection, Mrs. Gunter, you will have me proposing in a moment.”

“But, think, Signor Cenari,” put in Dorris, “think of the heartless turn-down you would get.”

She half closed her eyes and looked at the painter.

“I’m not so sure of that, Dorris,” said Cordelia.

“Then,” said Cenari, “will you do me the honour?”

They kept up a little badinage which offended Dorris. She knew they jested, but it hurt her to think Cenari could be collected and indifferent when her own heart was throbbing so violently.

“Mrs. Van Lennep, are you not tired after that strenuous swim of the morning?” he asked.

“Yes, I really am; my arms ache and my head as well. I hope a sip of that champagne will make me feel a little livelier. Oh, it is not even opened, Signor Cenari, do call the *garçon*.”

She became nervous and fretful. Cordelia’s laughter seemed to be piercing her soul. She was fatigued, and wanted to rest. But she heard always two voices—reminiscent, jesting, delicately censorious. She, indeed, belonged to another generation. Cenari in his white flannels

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looked so provokingly oblivious, so sublimely self-possessed, as if she were removed entirely from the plane of his observation. His boyish pallor was enhanced by the darkness of eyes and the redness of lips. And to some extent, at least, she was of his own type. The idea pleased her. It seemed in some elusive manner to bring him nearer—this decadent Italian to the Puritan. What a study in contradictions! For it was precisely the blood in her veins which had strained at the proverbial gnat, which caused intermittent revolt against this man who, nevertheless, in one way and another, filled up so large a part of her thought. Dwarfed against the vigorous manhood of such men as her dead father, it was only occasionally that Dorris saw Cenari stripped of his veneer, and knew him for liar and cynic. She was glad, after all, that she was a woman of the world and not in the faintest sense likely to love unwisely and too well. She was hearing his voice:—

“To be sure, Mrs. Gunter; he had an army of Albanians with him there. We went together to Sunium, Thessaly, Delphi, and most of the accessible portions of Greece.”

Dorris's eyes wandered beyond him, far out upon the distant road. So he had been in her beloved Greece, and she had never dreamed of it; and the world believed in telepathy! He had seen Sunium, Marathon, Eleusis, Phyle. Her footsteps had been in his, in the land she loved so well.

“If you want to talk of Greece,” Cordelia was saying, “here is Mrs. Van Lennep. It's one of her passions.”

Cenari was looking into her eyes at last.



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"Indeed!" he said, with an accent of surprise. "How long ago were you in Greece?"

"I left in May."

"Then you know"—

"I know every inch of it, Signor Cenari—at least every inch I saw. I love the red poppies of the field of Marathon, the solemn beauty of Ægina's temple, the honeyed recesses of Mt. Hymettus. But, signore, I love solitary Sunium better than them all."

"So do I," he said. "I went there with friends in a sailing vessel when a boy."

Dorris opened her eyes.

"We were bound for Athens, and anchored off Cape Colonna at four o'clock one morning. Gods! The sunrise over that temple was a sight one sees but once."

"How I should love it," murmured Dorris.

"Let's start off for it now," he laughed.

They drifted back to Venice in the afternoon heat; and though the little trip had its discomforts, Dorris was supremely content. Nevertheless, she asked to be left at the Piazza, and when Cenari wonderingly assented, she felt that the indifferent rôle she was playing was rather a clever one.

"When will you pose again?" he inquired as she stepped from the gondola, and she felt that he was asking her why she took this sudden fancy to wander off alone.

She nodded a good afternoon to Cordelia, and frowned slightly at him. Then she turned to walk on, interrupting the course of sleek, overfed pigeons which waddled in the sunlit space ahead of her.

She sought diversion in the shops near by, and finally bought a copy of Palma Vecchio's "Santa Barbara," but

she could not keep from her a rising irritation which included Cordelia and Cenari as well as her absent husband. Why was all the world so utterly disagreeable? Why was she forever at odds with Fate? As she approached the steps to call a gondola, she felt that she was tired of nothing less than this City of her Love! Was life all like this? She couldn't return to Cordelia's presence quite so soon. Where should she go? Then she thought of the original Santa Barbara which her father had gone with her to see two years before. Accordingly: "*Al Santa Maria Formosa*," she ordered the gondolier.

The boat passed into a narrow canal below Danieli's. By this time, Dorris was thoroughly unhappy. Why in the world had she come off alone to visit a dismal church? Nevertheless, when finally she stood before the old painting, the cool air of the cathedral and the associations which centered in it, fell upon her spirit like balm. The reds of the old canvas fascinated her, and she unrolled the newly purchased picture to compare it with the Santa Barbara before her.

"Is she not beautiful, our Santa Barbara?" fell upon her ears, and Dorris started.

"Signor Cenari!" she exclaimed, petulantly.

He bowed low.

"My life is not in danger now, at any rate," she said, as he handed her the photograph which had dropped from her hands, "and I came here to be alone."

He looked at her with an air of bland neutrality.

"Why did you follow me?" she demanded.

"I,—follow you, madame? Is it not better to say that the Fate which saved your life this morning, meets you here—a Nemesis?"

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"I am not easily frightened, signore."

"Thank you, thank you, signora. I appreciate the compliment."

"Why don't you go to"—

He was smiling now.

"Germany," she added, "for common sense?"

"Could not madame teach me here?" he asked.

"The scientific side would balance the romance which lights up so prettily your carefully thought-out schemes. Then you would be charming, I am sure, and don't—oh, don't tell me that you go because I ask it." She stepped outside to the waiting gondola.

"May I begin the journey to which you condemn me, with *you*?" he asked.

Had she kept her eyes upon the red cushions of the boat, she would not have consented, but she raised them to the laughter in his. The desire that had rushed through her the night before, in the garden, came again with revived force.

"Yes," she managed to say.



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### CHAPTER XX.

Vex not thy soul with dead philosophy;  
Have we not lips to kiss with, hearts to love,  
and eyes to see!

—*Panthea.*

That night Cordelia and Dorris went to the house of Signora Malvoni where they were to dine. A gentle rain was cooling the heated marble of the palaces, and the fragrant mist was refreshing to them both as they were being rowed to Casa Malvoni. Dorris out of sheer bravado was wearing a soft red crêpe de chine, cut in simple flowing lines, her only ornament the large rose against the gold of her hair. There was something diabolic about the gown — at least when worn as Dorris wore it, and Cordelia had begged her to choose another which was not the shade of her lips and did not make her shoulders look like carved marble.

"The contrast of red and gold makes you look like the Spanish flag," she pleaded, and the girl was more determined than ever.

If it was so fantastic, it would surely delight Paolo; and all the way from the Spechio-Torni, Dorris had seen his faint smile on her entrance into the drawing-room. When at last she found herself before her hostess, something gripped her heart, for she knew instinctively that he was not there! Then he would not come—he would not come. For punctuality was regarded as his sole virtue, and genius may dispense even with that. Nevertheless, she lived in a fever of expectation until the entrance

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of Malcolm Forrest—unaccompanied. The two artists invariably came to social functions together.

A mad longing to leave these rooms—to go to him and ask forgiveness for her rudeness of the afternoon, surged through her.

When they were seated at the table, she overheard Mr. Forrest say to Signora Malvoni,—

“He simply wouldn’t come. How nice to be his understudy occasionally, but I fear I do not look the part.”

“Nevertheless,” drawled Signora Malvoni with a comical air of resignation, “no doubt I shall be stupid enough to invite him again.”

So, it seemed that he had intended to come, probably before his interview with her at the *chiesa Santa Maria Formosa*. She had been rude to him, she knew it very well—and after his saving of her life, too, at the risk of his own! No wonder he was hurt. She was sure that it was all over, that he did not wish ever to meet her again.

How this company bored her. What inane conversation, what vapid airs—what men! It was insufferable. Paolo was saying once more,—“*The Fate which saved your life this morning meets you here—a Nemesis!*”

Nemesis surely had overtaken her if she were nevermore to see him.

Signor Pavolo, who for the second time had taken her in to dinner, she completely ignored.

“Well, signora,” she heard across the table, “it is the consolation of men, this drinking to the absent one.”

Involuntarily, Dorris raised her glass, and set it down untasted. This was, indeed, disillusion. She was filled with chagrin. To think that she, Dorris Bedford, of

gentle lineage, as delicately bred as a Roman princess, should allow herself to be swayed by the machinations of a Cenari!

Though outwardly self-possessed, she was working herself into a nervous frenzy. Here at this table with the eyes of the world upon her, that dreaded mood with which she had wrestled in secret many, many times, was forcing its will upon her. She summoned *her* will to the rescue. Once for a heart-beat she gripped the sides of her chair. It was passing—it was passing. She would soon be herself again.

And Pride was coming to the aid of Will, it seemed, for at last she could smile; she was conquering that irritation which had goaded her almost to speech.

After dinner, she sought Signora Malvoni.

"I am completely worn out," she said; "allow me to excuse myself. And will you not explain to Mrs. Gunter when she is ready to leave that I thought I would be much better at home, and disliked to spoil her evening?"

Her hostess made a polite move to detain her. Sudden indisposition was often as suddenly dispelled. A glass of wine would be sent to her in the library; it was doubtless but a matter of a few moments' rest. She would not even be missed from the company.

But Dorris, as usual, had her own way, and it was Signor Malvoni's gondola which took her to the Specchio-Torni.

She mounted the marble staircase with vague restlessness, and found Felno in the rotunda. An unaccountable impulse that had rather suggested than defined itself during dinner grew suddenly into purpose at the sight of the gondolier. On him, at least, she might rely, and



picking up her skirts, she ran down the staircase, Felno following at her heels.

"To the Palazzo Gianelli," she cried, suddenly turning upon him, and once more she was upon the water.

As they approached the main entrance to the palace in the Via Camberino, she debated whether it were better to enter there, where the iron portals stood open so invitingly, or by way of the garden-gate on the Giudecca. Then she ordered the gondolier ahead.

She found herself in a moment shivering nervously in the court with the palace looming up with every appearance of desertion. She mounted the stairs which seemed interminable, and saw high up in the balcony the figure of Cenari's gondolier standing like a sentinel on guard.

He bowed perfunctorily as she drew near, and stood as at attention, but with a slight reservation of respect in his attitude which sent the blood to Dorris's throat.

"Signor Cenari is at your service, *signorina*," he said, with an emphasis on the last word which might easily be offensive.

Dorris drew herself up with sudden hauteur, but timidity overcame her, and she followed the man to the studio door upon which he knocked twice without response. Then he flung it open, and Dorris preceded him into the dimly lighted apartment. A single candle spluttered in one of the candelabra, casting vague shadows upon the tiger skins.

"If the *signorina* will be seated, I will find Signor Cenari," said the gondolier, and disappeared.

She was alone, and frightened. The animal skins looked barbaric in the half light; it was the atmosphere of the East wearing an aspect of primeval savagery.

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The hangings at the portal parted, and Cenari entered. His blasé air startled her with a sense of overwhelming doubt. As she looked at him, she wondered why he did not speak, why this appearance of utter weariness. Then he stood perfectly still as if under the influence of sudden shock.

"Mrs. Van Lennep—Mrs. Van Lennep, good evening. Pardon me, I am pleased to see you. But what sweet folly! If some one has seen you enter—who might have seen your gondola? But why should we borrow trouble? The deuce is, all Venice knows Felno. I could not dream it was you. After all, you really must let me take you back."

"Quite like a man, Signor Cenari," Dorris smiled at him, "you have misconstrued my errand here. I have come like a penitent in sackcloth to get absolution—from *you*! I was so rude to you to-day. Believe me, I am very sorry. Can you forgive?"

The black cloak fallen from her shoulders revealed the cardinal gown, the white arms.

He stared.

"My God," he blurted, "you're a baby. Would you risk your reputation to come here to-night to ask forgiveness—of *me*? How like a sweet child. If all Venice could view it in its true light. But you should not have come as a beautiful devil, you should not have dropped your coat."

He sat down on a rug beside her and studied her face.

"Bewitching, beautiful devil! Did you come to tempt me?" he asked.

"I only came, Paolo, because a something irresistible forced me to. I am sorry, and I was so troubled about it,

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that I couldn't eat my dinner. I left Casa Malvoni, went to Torni to get Felno and came here. *Voilà!* Say you have forgiven!"

She moved forward, her elbows on her knees, her chin in her right hand, and smiled adorably.

"You are unfair," he said, "to attack me in that girlish way. I can make no stand whatever."

"What sort of stand would you care to make?" she asked.

"That of a faithful dog."

"A really faithful dog?"

"Precisely, you have it," he said.

"And how would you begin?" she asked.

"Oh, Mrs. Van Lennep, I beg you to leave."

"Am I so dangerous as that?"

"Well, I will at least light the other candle for my own protection."

"I acquiesce," she said, "if you promise to burn no incense in those charming censers."

He picked up a long wax taper, and lighted the other candlestick.

"You see," he commented, "there is quite a light now. That gold hair of yours will not be such a contrast to the pale face and throat."

"Paolo, I am going to see you no more. That portrait of mine is never to be finished."

He knelt down beside her.

"Of course you won't see me—till the next time," he laughed.

"Please try to take me seriously," she said. "It is to say good-bye to you also that I have come."



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"You dear little girl," he murmured, "of course I'm going to finish it, and of course I'm going to know you. Don't laugh at me like that."

"But I really meant it," she said seriously.

He took one of her hands and kissed its fingers. The subtle charm of his magnetism yielded its power at the touch of his lips.

"Why, why, *why* did you come, Dorris?"

She rose from her seat and looked at him. "Why?—the eternal question of the ages. Let me see the gold room," she said.

He opened the door for her, and lit the candles on the wall. It was very effective but she would not enter.

"You may tell me the third stanza here," she said. She took her position on one of the rugs near a censer.

He knelt once more before her and kissed both her hands.

"Oh, Dorris," he said, "the faint, sweet perfume of you—Dorris! I can think of nothing but your carved red lips. I kissed them once. Let me kiss them again. Any hope I might cherish is vanity, I know."

He was gently pulling her hands as if to make her kneel before him. She resisted and threw her head back.

"Oh, Paolo," she cried, "do not draw me on—and on. Paolo, can't you see I am fighting, struggling, against this new, unwelcome thing? No, dear, I will not kiss you. I will not. Don't you think that I, also, want to taste your lips again? I am strong, though, as woman must be, and you are strong and cruel. Paolo, let me go, while you still have an atom of respect for me. Let me go!"

"I want to kiss you," he said, "I must kiss you. I will kiss you," artfully drawing her down to him.

She threw her head back as if to evade his kiss. He crushed her lips to his own but found them unresponsive.

"Answer my caresses," he breathed passionately, kissing her ear the while with delicate art; "don't you want to kiss me? Then I will cease."

He loosened his clasp. She threw her arms forward upon his shoulder, looking longingly into his eyes.

"Give me your mouth, Paolo," she said at last.

He took the crimson gift and drained it to its lees. Then he made free of her lovely neck and arms, her closed eyes, her hair, her delicate throat. Once more he sought her parted mouth and breathed its perfume.

"Oh, Paolo," she cried, "Paolo, stop, you must let me go! You must let me go, this is folly, this is madness, but what divine madness. My pulses ache, ache—let me go."

"Tell me, tell me—you"—

"No, I shall never tell you that. It is not so."

She endeavoured to throw back her head and uttered a faint cry. He held her face in his hands, his eyes in hers, his breath upon her lips.

"But I desire you so. *Voglio tante cose!* Gods! You are as beautiful as the Seven Deadly Sins."

He kissed her ear again, and the soft throat below it. The rose fell from Dorris's hair to the floor, and she whispered,—"*T'amo.*"

He was holding her in an embrace that seemed to wound her—to stifle.

"Let me breathe, Paolo. You take my breath away," she murmured. "What a fool I am. Why did I come?"

He did not loosen his clasp, but strained her slender body in his arms till she felt the fast rhythmic beating of his heart against her own.

"You love? Yet you will not give all?"

"Paolo, how can you tempt me?" she whispered brokenly. "I am not a child of snow. I am a woman of fire and dreams. Paolo, promise me you will always have the greater strength to save me. Remember, *t'amo*."

"I am a brute, Dorris, but I am of the South. I love and hate intensely. You are cold—cold."

"Don't be cruel, Paolo. You say I am cold? You dare to say I am cold after the kisses I have given you?"

She picked up his hands, and kissed them till his flesh stung beneath her mouth. Then she caught his lips in a hard and cruel pressure.

"Cold? "O, *siete cattivo—sono infelice!*" she gasped. "I, cold!"

She fell exhausted against his shoulder and looked up at him as to a god.

"Paolo, dear," she whispered, "it is not that I haven't the desire to give, but that I have the strength to withhold,—Yes, the strength to withhold. What would desire be, without it, Paolo?"

"Nothing matters to me but that pomegranate mouth of yours, like Rossetti's 'Pandora.' Its sinewy sweetness laid on mine turns my brain to fire. I am not a man who knows himself when I feel its burning pressure."

"And we must say good-bye. I shall never see you again"—

"Save by accident," he said, softly.

"Save by accident," she repeated. "I am stronger than temptation, but you had almost made me forget it."



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I had completely forgotten when I came that I must go back for Cordelia."

"Indeed! Cordelia! Ah!"

"Don't Paolo. I could not fight against coming here to-night or against those kisses, because—because I"—

She hastily brushed back a stray lock of hair which tumbled into her eyes again.

"Because you, what, signora?"

"Signore!" she cried. "But, Paolo, you are not angry. You know, you must remember that it is because I—oh, what is the use? Good-bye."

"You mean good-night, Dorris. What is the caress of to-day worth if the frown of to-morrow has a lien upon it? Love doesn't think, it burns down barriers, 'it casteth out fear,' it is far reaching, it is all-seeing—and, it *promises!*"

"You would not spare me. Do not urge me on and on, lest you lose even the wish I have,—that I were free to give. Now, Paolo, I must go. I must go at once."

He stooped to pick up her rose which had fallen, and raised it to his lips in a passionate kiss. Dorris smiled sadly and held out her hand for it, but he shook his head.

"It is mine, signora," and he held the curtains apart for her. Then as she looked back at him once more, he held the rose up to view. "*Marchesa*, this flower will fade, and so will its lovely owner—some day. Its petals will dry, its fragrance will vanish. Yet when it is faded, I shall keep it for the memories that will ever cling to it of a sweet, misty night in Venice, a beautiful woman in the full glory of her springtime, and just a red, red rose."

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### CHAPTER XXI.

Take back the hope you gave,—I claim  
Only a memory of the same,  
And this beside, if you will not blame,  
Your leave for one more last ride with me.  
—*Browning.*

Felno rowed with unaccustomed rapidity, arriving at the steps of the Casa Malvoni before the guests had departed. Dorris waited under the black canopy until Cordelia came. The spell of Cenari's presence—of the hour just past—was over her still, suffusing her with a glow in which the sense of shame was obscured. The realization that it was dishonour, that she was no longer even striving against the soft delights of this growing love, was holding her in a mighty thralldom; and the sense of wifely duty, of womanly self-approval was as water unto wine in comparison. The powerful force of this Italian's magnetism rose up against the bitter loneliness of her life. Could she adjust the balance? It was to such temptations as this that women had yielded, and for which she had been cold and narrow enough to despise them. No longer did it hurt her pride to know that Paolo had quickened her into a knowledge so full of bitter sweetness. How lonely she felt, how unloved, how dumb before the world's naked scorn! For she felt the eyes of the censorious searching out her secret, and blazoning it. This was what life meant; this was what marriage to Henry Van Lennep had closed to her and sealed. Why should not her husband have been the one to waken dormant possibilities, to stir her senses to music—the

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very poetry of passion? It surely was no fault of hers that she had been sleeping, with this joy hushed like something dead. Only the striking of the chord which Cenari had mastered had lashed rebellion, and out of morbid yearning had produced this wondrous joy of life. How dull, inanimate and colourless she must have seemed to the whole world of beings, who, nevertheless, pretended not to know this thing. No wonder she had seemed incomprehensible; no wonder Cordelia watched anxiously to understand her brooding. Before she had met *him*, the *motif* of tragedy itself had puzzled her. What was it in him that had cornered her imagination? forced her to look into her heart, and whisper to her inmost consciousness, "*This is what makes men and women endure heartache and longing — just the hope that one will share!*"

Of course, she had a fight before her; she might win or not. But she must fight; that seemed inevitable, even in such a moment as this. She might become a nun, she might take up her wifely burden, by steeping herself in all the puritanical books which denied the existence of this thing at the root of existence; she might come to the threshold of negation—but would she cross it, and deny? It was the unthinkable of this proposition that nerved her to fight—for the code which keeps society together. Even if she were to die, she felt that his memory would hover over her, that his kisses would endow her with the power to feel.

Why had she married? why had she disregarded Cordelia's wishes? Then might she not have wandered in honour through a world of beauty with Paolo by her side? The everlasting *might-have-been* of the poet had



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overtaken her, too? Of what use was it—regret? Would Cenari have loved her then? Ah! did he love her *now*?

Fear stalked with mockery straight into the fire of her passion, and blew it as with a bellows. If he did not love her! He had not told her so, and the possibility that he did not was so cruelly potent, that it must, if dwelt upon, make her mad! What else had she to live for? She, Dorris Bedford, who had scorned the weak, to care now chiefly for the penalty of weakness!

Worn out by the struggle to arrive at a conclusion by reasoning in a circle, she burst into sobs—of irritation. Why in the world didn't Cordelia come?

The voices of the departing guests smote her as with a lash. Why those light, merry voices when *she* was in such utter misery—a misery a thousand times more hopeless than the agony she had felt when face to face with her father's death. A woman of flesh and blood whom life had used so cruelly,—what fiends had rounded out her horoscope?

Tactful Cordelia, who came very soon, took her place beside the sobbing girl without a word!

"Cordy, I can't bear it, I can't!" she sobbed as the dear friend took her head and pressed it tenderly against her shoulder.

Mrs. Gunter soothed her.

"The nerves play all sorts of capers with us, Dorris. They are not to be petted, but dominated by the mind. Rise above it, my brave girl."

"Nerves, nerves—as if that were all!"

Cordelia looked pityingly down upon the golden head, and knew by the lessening of the sobs that the paroxysm was passing.

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"Softly, dear girl! It's good to have a cry now and then. I think you've needed one for a long, long time. The day has been rather strenuous, you see. And now you're going to sleep until oh, so late! you've no idea; and I will sleep with you, in case of restlessness."

The girl nestled like a child against her side.

"It's sweet to have you here, Cordelia. You have always been so good to me—so very good, Cordelia."

"Let me be better. You can always tell me the deepest, most sacred secrets of that young heart of yours. I have gone through much, baby mine. I will understand."

The impulse to tell Cordelia all, swept over her, but she fought it. If she were ever to tell her friend, it could not be in such an hour as this, sacred to the memory of his caress,—to the hour of his kiss.

She slept that night, peacefully, after a fatiguing day; and it was sweet as she felt the softness of rest stealing upon her, to know that Cordelia was with her in protecting tenderness.

It was ten o'clock in the morning when she awakened to see Cordelia standing before her with a little tray.

"You dear, sweet thing," she breathed, "you have brought me my breakfast yourself."

"Yes—and here's a letter. It was delivered by a gondolier this morning."

As Mrs. Gunter spoke, she put the service of chocolate and rolls near Dorris, while the girl feverishly picked up the blue envelope she knew could be used by only one,—Paolo! As she broke the seal, Cordelia, delicate as ever, stole away. Dorris waited a moment with violently beating heart; then read,—

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PALAZZO GIANELLI, VIA CAMBERINO.

*My dearest Dorris:—*

Into the morning, Dorris, I thought of you, sweetheart, and I want you to forget some things. You know what. It has all stirred my conscience, and troubled me so! And that we may cast it ever out of remembrance, grant me something that will give me the same pleasure to receive it will give you ease to grant, "one more last ride with me." Let me take you again to the Brenta Valley and the old villas along its banks. Let me hear your voice, and hope a vain hope—only once more!

In memory of your confession of last night, grant me this desire. Let us go in the afternoon so that we may see the sunset and come back across the lagoon in the twilight haze. The day is typical. My thoughts are with you as you wake to read this letter. I love you and cannot cease to love you—no, not even with my life, for I should always breathe the subtle sweetness of you.

I do not ask for a hope, nor even the shadow of one, but only the shadow of a shadow! Ride by my side again over there, across the green fields into the sunset.

I feel your mouth. I see your smile.

*Je t'embrasse encore.*

She kissed the letter and smiled. It was the first love-letter she had ever received, and she a wife! She thought of what was her due, of the sweetness denied her because of her marriage; and of her dreams! Here was a letter from the man she loved, couched in terms of love, and he even said he loved her. This celebrated man wrote her a love-letter, this genius wrote that he loved her. She



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re-read it. How proud she was that it was she, of all the women in Venice, whom he adored. And the past years must have been as lonely as these few later ones she had known, for all this time he had been waiting for her to come into his life, and seal his fame with the mystery of their mutual passion.

“‘I feel your mouth. I see your smile. *Je t’embrasse encore!*’ ” she repeated softly. “Well, it is the same with me, too, dear. I see your red lips smile, and I kiss you again, again.”

Forgetting her breakfast, forgetting that Cordelia would soon come in, she sat down to write:

### PALAZZO SPECCHIO-TORNI.

*Paolo dearest:—*

Your sweet letter has come. Ah, the pleasure it gives me. It even soothes the pain I felt last night on leaving you. Ride to-day? No, Paolo, dear, not to-day, but to-morrow. We will ride together, and we shall be side by side. Ride on! Ride on!

“‘What if we still ride on, we two,  
With life forever old, yet new,  
Changed not in kind but in degree,  
The instant made eternity;  
And heaven just prove that I and she  
Ride, ride together, forever ride.’”

There is the last stanza of Browning’s “Last Ride Together,” and you and I shall have one. The sweetness of the hope, I would keep with me one whole day; and though it gives me something to look forward to, I shall be haunted by the possibility that it may rain or something happen to prevent.

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Paolo, the love I bear you is so wonderful that I cannot measure the insight it has given me into things; the most mysterious part of it all to me is that it has proved to me the sweetness of renunciation. All my life, Paolo, I shall be with you in spirit, all my life the remembrance of having known you will help other things. At any rate I have not missed the knowledge of what might have made me happy. Oh, why couldn't the greatest possible happiness come to you and me? God was wise, perhaps, to bring this to me so late in life; years ago, the happiness would surely have killed me. I used to be so glad that I was pretty, for beautiful women are said to spin the web of their own fate; but if God began by showering me with His great gift of beauty, somehow I have turned the purpose, and this divine conception of His, is the very weapon which is spoiling everything. The hours spent away from you are so unendurable. It is all so new to me, this utter groping in the dark to settle upon a purpose, that I cannot grasp its meaning. The stars blink up in the skies so unheedingly, and all the palaces and all the dead romance in this city that I love, have no longer any sort of meaning to me, except to remind me that I love you, that I love and love and love you!

As the years go on, I wonder if all this may not change me into some one else—I mean, whether the spirit within me can remain the same amid the hope and the battle. I have never lived, I have spoiled everything with my own hands, and it is all my own fault that it is all so hard and terrible for you.

Let us be thankful, just now, though, that love has come to us at last! We have felt it in its calmness and

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in its fury; we have its roses, and may be crowned with its lilies. I hope it will not make you so unhappy that you cannot paint, because I know how it must comfort you to be able to busy yourself with other things. With me, the madness of thinking of you grows sometimes into tragedy.

To-morrow if the weather is fine, we will ride, you and I. Ah, Paolo, I know of no phrase so sweet as thine with which to close this letter.

DORRIS.

Then she read the letter over, its every line staring at her in mocking criticism. It was so loosely constructed; the sentences hitched. It was so cold. She tore it into fragments, and walked the room.

"How can one *write* when one feels like this? Words are for thoughts, and thoughts are mere gibes at feeling."

She walked on aimlessly, and at last found herself before the Venus in that wonderful bath-room. With an instinctive sense of companionship, she put her arms about the statue, and said,—

"Venus, queen of beauty, queen of love. You have sent me these two precious gifts, but there is a penalty for both. Venus, if there be a way, ever so hard, to take this penalty away—Why do you smile at me like that? You were made for many lovers, and I who am tied to one, bound to one hand and foot—and one whom I can never love. I will resist the madness. I desire this man whom I love, yet I may not possess him. Is this why you gave me beauty, moulded me into your own form? Oh, Venus, you are cruel, cruel."

She re-entered her room, and thought she had missed something or other—was it a letter? Then she laughed



as she glanced at her untouched breakfast. Cordelia would say, after that, that there was no doubt, she *was* in love. The chocolate was quite cold, but she enjoyed it nevertheless. Then she turned to her pen once more.

"Dear Paolo," was what she wrote, "I will be ready to-day at three to ride with you. Yours, Dorris."

Cordelia came in just as she had finished.

"Well, girly," she said, "what are you doing to-day?"

"Riding with Paolo, Cordelia."

"Dorris! Don't, don't, don't! I beg of you, don't."

"There! You're nagging again. Trot along now, and write to some of those friends both you and he enjoy."

"Dorris, Dorris, how can you say such catty things to me. I mean it, Dorris. I ask you *not* to go."

"Why not?"

"I will not hurt you, dear, by going into detail, but I do ask you to stay with me."

"What's your reason?"

"The gossip is rather unkind, Dorris. It is wise to observe the conventions."

"There you go again. Conventions! conventions! What do I care about conventions? What do I care what people say about me? I tell you it is nothing to me, nothing."

"I have given up a great deal for you since I have known you. Won't you make a sacrifice for me—just one?"

Dorris looked at her.

"Let me think, Cordelia; you ask a great deal," she said.

"But these are the only things worth giving up, Dorris, really."

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"No, Cordelia, I remain firm. I go."

"Then you oblige me to tell you something that you won't like. Do you know that Lady Blanchard has had a detective following you and, and—and this painter?"

Dorris laughed outright.

"What a novel way for you to refer to Cenari—for I presume you have reference to him."

"I am not playing with you, Dorris. I mean Cenari, of course."

"Then will you mind giving me your room just now in preference to your company?"

"I will hide your habit. I will. I will."

Dorris stared at her cruelly.

"I hate\* you, I hate—and hate you," she cried.

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### CHAPTER XXII.

For this is Wisdom,—to love, to live,  
To take what Fate or the gods may give,  
To ask no question, to make no prayer,—  
To kiss the lips and caress the hair.  
—*India's Love Lyrics.*

For the second time, Dorris and Paolo were walking their horses along the road from Chioggia toward the Brenta Valley. The heat of the day was modified by the occasional breeze from the north.

"Paolo, have you ever read Hewlett's 'Little Novels of Italy?' Among them is a story, 'The Judgment of Borso,' I believe, in which a little party started its ride to Ferrara along this same road," she said.

"Oh, yes, Dorris, dear, I remember. One of the girls had been ostracized from Venice owing to her leanness. The other was a true Venetian, a lover of her home and bed. I remember, a lazy, languorous creature."

"I am glad, so very glad, we put our ride off till late afternoon. It is far prettier to have a last one towards sunset, even if there are chaperons who object," she said.

She favoured him with a saucy toss of the head.

"And it is to be the last—the very last one?"

"I have given my word, Paolo; it is final."

They passed a sylvan retreat on a lonelier stretch of the road.

"Let us dismount, Dorris, and sit under those trees."

"The shade does look inviting, Paolo; help me to dismount."



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He unfastened the elastics under her heel, and held her in his arms a moment before he let her touch the ground. She led the way to a lonely, shadowed spot under the pines, but he waited to tether the horses before he followed her.

"Paolo, we will sit here to see the blue sky of the West turn into flaming scarlet. Then we will ride back to Chioggia in the sunset glow. It's sweet here among the pine needles, isn't it, Paolo? It's wonderful to know you're beside me in the little wood."

She leaned back against his shoulder, and breathed in the restfulness of the retreat, unconscious for the moment that he was intently studying her face. Before she knew it, he had tilted back her derby and pressed his lips to the fragrant gold beneath.

"Look up at me," he said.

She raised her eyes, and they held each other's gaze for long.

"Dorris, oh, Dorris," he whispered at last, "I was right; you *are* as beautiful as the Seven Deadly Sins. Where did you get that mouth? Rossetti must have dreamed it long ago. Dorris, let us hope as we sit together among the pine-needles of this little glade. Let us hope, Dorris, dear. Look at me."

She only played with her crop.

"Dorris, dear, may I hope just for once?—hope is the proper thing in this setting, on this warm afternoon in Italy—with you by my side. Dreaming of a Greek isle in some Eastern sea and the red lips and gold hair of my Dorris enchanting the land with her smiles of youth and making the very birds to sing through the whole year.

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"Oh, had we some bright little isle of our own  
In a blue summer ocean, far off and alone,—  
Where simply to feel that we breathe, that we live  
Is worth the best joy that life elsewhere can give!"

"So you are quoting dear little Tom Moore to me?  
You have omitted some of that stanza, Paolo."

"As critical as that, Dorris?"

"No-o-o. Let us dream awhile if you wish, Paolo. Let us dream we are on that Greek isle and its only inhabitants. There, without a care, we should love each other to death under the bluest skies in the world. We should bathe in the aquamarine depths of the Ægean at sunrise, and wander in the rose garden through the morning hours. The birds would sing to us through the long sunny afternoon, and I should try to drown their little voices by an old melody on my golden lyre with your voice accompanying. By moonlight, we should dream on the beach, or kiss each other. But, dear Paolo, why is all this so foolish, so unheard-of and absurd? Why are all the sweet and tender things the things that reality snickers at?"

"Has not many a girl before your time loved in the same fashion, Dorris? But I do not think it means so much to you, after all. Still, it is a pretty rôle you are playing—to console me for my hopeless love."

"Paolo, Paolo! How can you shame me to the earth?" She looked at him in a startled, fearing way. "Can you imagine that I would go to your house as I did last night, alone, to ask your forgiveness, if you were nothing to me in my very heart of hearts? Do you dream that I would make so wretched one of the few friends I have ever known? Poor Cordelia! I am breaking her heart."

Then think what I have given you, oh, Paolo! Those kisses! Do you suppose, Paolo, respecting my husband as I do, even though I do not love him, do you suppose I would"—

"I think you are a dear, dreamy child, and that I have no right to understand anything at all that is not as it should be."

"But it is due to me that you understand that I am not dreaming of my love for you; it is right that you understand what my husband must be to me, his name—that for the mere fancy, I cannot allow"—

"Why should you be so vehement, Dorris, when you mean to give up nothing? What have you done that you should seek to excuse it? It is not love, but coquetry that weighs and measures every little act."

She waited a moment.

"I was trying to make you see"—

"You said just now that 'for the mere fancy' you could not allow something. Why, you *admit* that it is mere fancy. What am I to think?"

The girl covered her face with her hands, then quickly started up and confronted him with,—

"You weigh and measure every little *word*, and turn it against me, Paolo. You can try to tempt me, but you shall not. You asked for this last ride, to dream the shadow of a shadow of a hope in, and," smiling, "as Victor Hugo says, 'The shadow of a shadow is leanness, indeed.' I thought it could do no harm to either of us; yet here you sit beside me, not a man desiring shadows or even hopes of shadows, but demanding everything. You must remember."



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"Remember? Then, it is not love! I did not suppose a girl like you could ever love me, but yet you led me to believe you did."

"Do you know, Paolo, the trouble I had to keep this engagement with you to-day? Cordelia positively forbade it. She swore she would prevent it if she had to hide my habit. We have quarreled as never before, and I don't know what will be the outcome. I couldn't blame her for leaving me entirely; after the long friendship that has existed between us, I might have managed differently."

"Dorris, I would throw my profession, my friends to the winds, and take you with me to the ends of the world. Will you come?"

"I wonder if I am too strong or too weak, Paolo, to forget other ties."

"Don't doubt that it takes strength to yield, Dorris—great strength. Those who condemn it as weakness know neither the one nor the other; they are devoid of real passion. The only weakness concerned in it at all is the weakness of loving, and that is not the will of the man or woman who feels its power. It is arbitrary. Are you the possessor of the strength or the weakness?"

"It doesn't matter which. In any case, I shall not forget my duty to myself. It is useless to discuss it; it leads us nowhere."

"It is very fascinating, Dorris, to discuss it from a purely unromantic and disinterested standpoint. It interests me exceedingly."

"Would you like to hear a strange story?" asked Dorris. "It is a bit of family history, but it explains some-

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thing—at least to me. My grandmother had something of the romance which sings in my blood; she fell in love—and with Mrs. Gunter's father."

"Indeed, well, most grandmothers have their little histories which they think very interesting; and most fathers, too, for that matter. Probably your grandmother and Mrs. Gunter's father were no exceptions to the rule."

"But this was as serious to her as mine is to me," persisted the girl. "She confided in her husband, was taken by him from home, that she might forget,—and died in Egypt. My mother was a little girl."

"So was mine once, Dorris. Let us not be serious, little girl."

"I want you to understand it, Paolo."

"I do. Your mother doubtless fell in love, too. That is nothing—nothing at all. Ladies guard themselves very well in these weighty matters, and it never is quite so serious as to make them unhappy—at least unhappy enough to be quite sincere."

"But rather than be unfaithful to my father, my mother killed herself, Paolo, with me in her arms."

Cenari's face changed, and he looked very grave as he bent over and reverently kissed her hand.

"Forgive me, dear. I thought you jested, or were but teasing me."

The girl went on earnestly. "And do you think with such tragic love stories as these two, born into my blood as it were, I should not fear any caprice, any trifling with the moral code, however much I might feel justified? And I do not feel justified. I have the best husband in

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all the world, and I am his in the eyes of God and man. He has honoured me in the way men honour the woman they love, and I could always know he was there beside me, if I needed him in trial or distress."

"What a mature speech, Dorris, for so young a girl. But even so, your heart is not young enough to be filled with one thought only. You are wiser, or you do not love enough. Love sees only the object of its devotion. You admire Teresa Guiccioli? Yet you would not dare to do what she did. There is not enough behind it all in you. The sweetness of her love-romance gives you a sort of intellectual feast; but follow where she led, you dare not!"

She struck the ground with her crop.

"It is not that. I am between Scylla and Charybdis. Scylla invites me to the common sense and truth of all the ages, the purity of soul, and the respect of all good people. Charybdis calls from the other side, to give myself to you, that I am yours, and you are mine, by every right of nature, love, and divine intention, that I should throw myself into your arms and give up to the madness of youth and the joy of living. Paolo, Paolo! what can I do? I see you, I am with you, and the desire to give up everything I have ever known and loved, give it up for your sake, is so sweet and so overmastering that I sometimes feel driven by fear to the other extreme—the sweet, good side of me that is preaching the wisdom of the ages. Paolo, you will drive me to madness. What am I to do? Do you not realize the power which my mother's fate, and her mother's fate, have over my weakness for you; how it cries out a warning which else it were easy not to hear? Can you not help me in my struggle? Re-



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member that it is love which 'helps us to bear that which is difficult.' "

"Has not the thought come to you, Dorris," said Paolo, now risen, his hand upon her arm, "that you may be, that in fact you *are* strong enough to do that which frightened so greatly your mother and your grandmother? Does not the *strength*, the position of your father, his name, count for something? What is the use of having brains, of inheriting intellect, if you must move in a rut—be fanned by the conventions?"

She looked up at him, and he went on, eagerly,—

"Tell me, Dorris, when you are in my arms, do you hear the good conscience of Scylla, or merely Charybdis and its life-giving hope—its unquenchable joy?"

She looked at him, her eyes brimming with silent wonder. He smiled quizzically.

"Listen! Even the horses are neighing for us to be off. Hear them stamping! And if this is all we have to say"—

He broke off suddenly. A breeze was stirring the leaves ever so lightly above them; the sun was departing, and a soft perfume was lingering in the copse. Its red tones revealed the two standing figures gazing at each other; so silent were they, that even a startled hare paused in its path before darting on.

The wind picked up some of the needles and scattered them at their feet.

"Here's something to the point, anyway," he muttered; then suddenly the turbulence of his spirit seemed to lift before the glory of the sunset now encasing the wood; and the girl secretly resented the artist in him.

"Paolo, Paolo," she breathed at last, "it is you who do not care. How beautiful—and false, the world is. It

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seems to me that the good God bequeathed these exquisite spots to Italy for the joy of two human beings who love one another, and the sunset air is sweet and perfumed. Oh, Italy, how lovely you are! How exquisite!"

She walked over to the now grazing horses, loosened the snaffles, and held them, awaiting him. Her right arm was on the pommel of her saddle. He moved deliberately over to where she stood, and took the foot she lifted ready for the spring; then the grip on his shoulder loosened, she closed her eyes, and buried her head on her arm.

"Ready?" he said at last.

"One, two, three!" she whispered, and he had lifted her so high that she landed rather violently in the saddle. Her face was suffused with the passing ecstasy of his touch which was reacting swiftly upon her. He adjusted her stirrup without once looking at her. "See," she cried, "it is almost dark. Think how late it will be when we get even as far as Chioggia. Cordelia! Oh, she will never, never forgive me."

He was mounted by this time, and they were starting down the road. The glory of the west was fast fading into the blue-grey of that enchantment, an Italian night.

"*Au galop*," she ejaculated suddenly, after having been riding in silence with her head uplifted by his side, and the horses suddenly started at top speed to tear through space. The dust rose in clouds behind them. As they turned a corner, Dorris's horse increased his speed.

"Check him, check him!" shouted Cenari—as it seemed from a distance, but something was pounding in the girl's ears, and with a furious sense that Paolo was gaining upon her, she used her crop.

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The painter had no trouble in overtaking her, and with a display of masterful horsemanship, and masculine ostentation, he rode across her path and caught her horse by the snaffle.

Dorris's annoyance was lost in admiration of Cenari's determination and strength, as he subdued the rearing animal, and then turned cynically to her.

"Little girls like their fun," he said, as they eyed each other, while their standing horses breathed their relief from the long gallop, "but they must not be allowed what is not good for them."

Dorris swept his figure with flashing eyes.

Chioggia lay in the distance, a mile away; and the whistle of a train came to them as it pulled across the bridge over the lagoon.

"What right had you to stop my horse?" she demanded.

"What right has a man to prevent a woman's suicide? Why, the answer is easy, none at all; but I should probably assume it."

They started to ride slowly on.

"Suicide?" she echoed. Strange that the word should call up before her the image of her *father!* The close communion she had held with his now vanished presence stirred in her a revolt quite as inexplicable against the man beside her. Was it not a living suicide to be goaded by this love?

Cenari held her reins as if fearful that the rider might again escape him. And while she was thinking of the vanity of her struggle—both now and in the future—he suddenly jerked her horse closer to his, and thrust an arm about her. Then she struggled as in a fury, petulantly



digging her little heels into her horse's flank as a child strikes vainly at whatever may happen to be in his way.

"Don't be afraid," Paolo was saying, "the horse will stop jumping if you will only sit still. What a baby. One would think you are afraid of *me*."

"Maybe I am—and of myself," she breathed almost in tears. Then with a hysterical movement she almost wrenched herself free.

He leaned toward her in a whisper charged with meaning:

"Stop this nonsense, Dorris, and be still. Your lips, your lips! give them to me and stop this *inferno*. Look up at me, so!"

With a lightning twist of his arm, Dorris's head was drawn back against his shoulder, while in the same instant he had regained the reins and crushed her lips in a wild kiss; and instead of rebelling, the girl had by this time an arm about his neck. When at last he released her lips, he still held her arm.

He was silent for a moment, looking straight ahead; then he met her eyes with something of purpose in his own.

"Ride as we are riding now for awhile, Dorris, with your arm on my shoulder and my arm upon yours. Let us ride *for stakes!*"

"Stakes!" she gasped.

"Yes—play a game; toss the dice; give this infernal Destiny of ours a chance to speak. We will gallop like this from here to Chioggia, in the twilight."

"In the twilight," she repeated, as if taking the words from his lips.

He looked at her.

"How white you are! I never dreamed your pallor—Why, girl, the game is fair. I haven't a ghost of a chance."

"You are playing a game"—

"Men have done it before—in Italy, for the one woman in all the world,—and won, too. It is medieval, but so is my passion; it is romantic, but so is the night. It is only Dorris, the Puritan, who is out of the spirit of it—and she shall come in."

"You can jest?"

"If I win, the jest will be yourself. Do you understand?"

"The *jest*?"

"Did I say *jest*? I meant, the gift. If our arms are together thus when we reach Chioggia, I win, I win!"

"But that's unfair. Your strength might enable you to"—

"That's not what I mean," he explained with a gravity to match her own. "If we are able to keep together at all, it will be a marvel. But at the finish, your arm will be *voluntarily* clasping my shoulder. You can't remove it; at least, that is my hope—the hope of a madman against the calmness of a Dorris. Do you agree? 'Let us ride, ride together, forever ride.'"

"You are absurd. You mean if I let my arm drop, you lose?"

"Yes, Dorris, but it is no laughing matter to me. I told you it was the last hope of a madman. Are you ready?"

For answer, she struck her horse which, getting in the lead, was gradually pulled back, and they were traveling now at an easy gallop over the old road, their arms entwined, the crescent moon on their path, and the earth around and beneath them, a delicate silver-blue.

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Before them lay the lagoon, a shining sheet. In the coolness and fragrance of the night, the horses seemed to will to speed ahead, but Dorris tightened her grip on Cenari's shoulder involuntarily, and in an instant they were nearer than before. His spell was upon her, and it did not frighten her, for she felt that she was in a trance in which were visible only the lines he wrote upon her heart. This magician, using her at his will, rode onward with her into that blackness of negation which she had so greatly feared but now feared no more. Surely, no mere *man* could affect her like this, tie up and confuse her sense of right and wrong, her sense of weakness and strength, and still be the source of this transcendent happiness.

Then she felt that his hand upon her shoulder, though firm, was not quite immovable, for every time she tightened her grasp, it was to know that he insensibly gave way. How black his soul must be, using this cruel power—deeper down in mystery than anything physical—and the nature of which he must be able to measure as she could not. He was so sure of himself, and, oh God! of her, of her! that he would draw back, or appear to, when he knew this would force her on. And he knew the stakes, yet would not help her morally. He knew the stakes.

Suddenly she realized that she could not move her arm, and each time he managed that the horses should not get apart; but his hand upon her sleeve was light. This was strange.

The lights of Chioggia were glowing in the near distance, and already they were passing houses. If her arm held his when they should pass Chioggia,—this was the wager that she was letting him win.



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Now, dreams which had disturbed her sleep became more potent than this great Reality with Paolo riding at her side. The train which had whistled a moment since over the lagoon was advancing, while she was prone upon its track. Was it last night that she had lain as in a trance, while Cordelia and Paolo—yes, and Harry, too—had come with tears and flowers and funeral chants? Was it last night that she had slept in that vault where the bones of wicked old doges rattled, and dead men gibbered, and the world outside was still?

She lifted her head to listen. As in a dream, she was hearing Cenari's voice calling to her to come out into the sunshine with him, no matter whether the "damned and dead" wanted her in there in the tomb with them, or not.

And though he was pleading for a word, she could not lift a finger to show that she breathed, that she heard and would move her lips if she could.

Then that gateway which she had been seeing as shutting in the dead gave way suddenly to another in her path beyond the shadow of which lay Chioggia.

"You *did* speak," she whispered between teeth that chattered, "you called me out of the grave."

"And call you yet," he murmured.

And there were those in this dry-as-dust world who denied the magic spell of personality, the fairy wand which transforms circumstance. She was still as unable to withdraw her arm from his shoulder as is the magnet to turn from steel.

She had taunted him with absurdity. *He* not know any game he might undertake with her? Had she supposed he had not lived through experiences at which she could only guess, to enable him to help the devil to cope

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with her? Cordelia had known, and that was why she feared.

They were galloping straight up to the gate; in a moment he would have the right to twit her with having *let him win*. Never! A host of restraining impulses leaped up as in a flame within her; the *ange tutélaire*, that light slumberer in the bosom of womanhood, always awake to guard, or at least to warn—fanned the flame; and she summoned every nerve and fibre to a fierce resistance against an abject alternative.

The answer came. As they passed through the gate, her arm dropped at her side like a leaden weight.

"Paolo," she said when he assisted her to dismount, "my arm was as numb, as numb as"—she hesitated for a comparison.

"I know," he bowed, "as your heart."

The reaction had come and she could smile.

"Far worse than that. It was really numb. I thought you were holding me powerless—so that I could not win our silly wager; and my arm all the time was really getting so I could not move it without an effort that it seemed as if I simply could not make."

"It seemed as if it had grown to my shoulder, as if it were no arm at all," he said quietly.

"Yes—and to some extent, it feels so still."

He looked at her with a slight air of inquiry.

"I willed it, and willed it, and willed it," he told her. "I was thinking of nothing else in all the world. I willed it with all my soul and body; I swore it by the devil within me, and the hell outside. But I was over-confident, you see. Women are so frail. As we drew near the gate, you startled me by saying that my voice had called to you

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out of the grave, and I could not regain my power—there wasn't time, you see; we were too near the gate."

"When your mind wandered," she laughed gaily, "down came my arm. Silly Paolo, to think that will frighten me. My own imagination was what was helping you, nothing else at all. I thought I *couldn't* escape."

"I will give the horses over to the groom," he said moodily, "they are about as tired of this sport as ourselves."

"But remember that you lose," she called, as he lifted his hat and turned away.



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### CHAPTER XXIII.

I would that you were all to me,  
You that are just so much, no more.  
Nor yours nor mine, nor slave nor free!  
Where does the fault lie? What the core  
O' the wound, since wound must be?  
—*Two in the Campagna.*

Dorris stared out into the night, her hands clasping each side of the parted curtain. The fragrance and warmth of the summer but intensified her burning unrest. The Grand Canal caught the crescent of the vanishing moon in its unruffled surface. The vine-clad wall of the Spechio-Torni garden smiled at its perfect reflection, and the few lights in the surrounding palaces rendered the peace and beauty of the scene more solemn to the watching girl. A passing gondola bearing laughing occupants, followed by two or three more silent ones, told her that it was Venice, her much cherished city; and for a moment it seemed enough.

Oh, Giorgione, could you have caught the expression on those parted lips, the tints in the hair and eyes, the slender throat stretched forward, with the faint colour of her beauty heightened by the dark room and the old grey of the balcony, who knows but you might never have found time to paint your "Concerto"? And Titian! Your canvas would have been cold and lifeless, however, for Dorris is far too exotic ever to have hypnotized your brush. No; she is not a Venetian beauty, Titian—sleep on. Her cheeks are not like ripened apples or

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pomegranate fruit; her hair is not burnished auburn or her shoulders a superb abundance of soft flesh, but her mouth is redder than the holly-berry or July Jacks springing into bloom. Rossetti! I know at least your eyelids would quiver if this lily girl stood before your "Sancta Liliās." Could even you have caught her frightened Daphne look, that inexplicable something arching the eyebrows so delicately—and yet not a frown. You would never have called it love, Rossetti.

In those moments when we are permitted to feel the rhythm with the mystery of infinity, how lesser things recede. We cannot mourn over trite personal miseries when the end and aim is foreshadowed in the glory of an Italian morning! If the night come with its shroud, the morning must surely follow with its bridal veil. And what man, not being permitted to choose that he live, would plead for any choice that is withheld so mercifully as the full rounding out of destiny?

As the distant music—Dorris was sure it was from the Giudecca—died away into the night whose fragrance was heavy like a burden upon her, she thought of the "damned and dead" who live without the gift of love. Would this night never be over, this night of hesitation and almost of hate? For it was useless to go on like this, brimful of torment. She had enjoyed books, she had found resource in art, and music had delighted her. Now, all this was past. She saw all things from a new angle,—and she could no longer enjoy.

How had the world lived and faced such agony through long years? Her ancestors had borne their burdens, somehow, and been helped out,—perhaps, by prayer.

Dorris dropped upon her knees at the window.

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"Venus, or Mary!" she prayed. "Why should I pour out my heart to a woman-god? Because I have never known a mother? But even as a child, they told me that the lilies changed their names from the Queen of Beauty to the Mother of God. Ah, me!"

She waited a moment with bowed head.

"I have everything that most women want," she cried out. "I can buy all the dainties that make women beautiful. I am beautiful. I am young. I love the beautiful. But happiness eludes me as if I were the plague. Why, because I *seem* so free, queens would envy me, and here I am tied down by temperament."

She rose and walked about the room.

"Can I overcome? But what is the use of the misery? If the desire to fight against it were not passing away, I would not care so much. But it may take my soul and all goodness with it,—it may, it may! Why was my father's love given me? Why was I born of a mother who loved life so little that she should welcome death?

"Is it the price I pay for everything else, that I shall value nothing but the happiness denied me? Ah, me, what irony! I would forego it all and creep down with the peasant nearer and nearer to the soil from which we all have sprung. Given all things of the earth earthy, if discontent is the price, I would have nothing, nothing—save the power to *enjoy*."

"Bring to my heart the answer; at least let me know *why*. Send me the faith that all is well with me, even if I suffer, and then I might endure. But not like this, not like this. It will make me a lost woman if it stains me so—if it stains me so."

She walked back to the window again.



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"Oh, if I could see a cross—maybe that would help me, as Maria says the sight of it once helped her. But there are no crosses in this city which rises, like Aphrodite from the sea; yet it is the symbol of a great faith, and faith in the usefulness of renunciation might help me. But I don't see the use of it—when I am young, when I was made for pleasure, when life is passing me by with hours 'swifter than the weaver's shuttle.' If I were led with a loving hand as Jesus blest the children, I might follow,—but I can't see my way alone. Give me peace at least one hour. Do not let my nerves rack me. Send me dreamless sleep. If I forego the ether,—that renunciation is entirely on the physical side. But it may serve, it may serve."

She lifted her head, for a song-boat had stopped before the opposite palace, and the tender, wistful music of Gounod's "*Ave Maria*" floated in to her. Never before had this song seemed to her an appeal, but the singer sent it forth—as from her soul!

"No one could sing like that who has not suffered almost as much as I," thought Dorris, as she rose and went upon the balcony. Then when she recognized the boat and knew the singer, disillusion came. The soprano was a coarse girl of the people whose heart could not have mastered melody, and yet, and yet, that song! Who was *she* to judge the depths of another's suffering—or of her incapacity to feel?

The last chord vibrated across the canal, and the song-boat started on its way, its many lanterns lighting up the waters. Then it disappeared.

Dorris re-entered her room and began a search for her long neglected guitar, which finally she found in the

dining-room, and crept from thence through the dark adjoining rooms to the staircase which she descended with a halting step.

When at last she opened the garden-gate where the fountain was playing to her mood, she stopped short under the influence of music and the night; then walked slowly across the garden to a wicker seat amidst the foliage near the wall. The guitar she found badly out of tune, and it was many minutes before its chords were rhythmic. She opened the gate in the wall, and looked up and down the deserted canal. Then, confident of being undisturbed, she regained her seat among the jessamine.

Her fingers wandered over the strings, and the strains of "*Ave Maria*" grew upon her as if played by other hands than her own. A window in the Vega Palace opened that some one might listen, but she was lifted above all things from without, even the consideration that her untrained voice to Venetian ears might be thin and vibrant. At the high C it did break, and irritated, she thrust the instrument upon the ground. Her vain endeavour to master a melody she loved transformed her mood into one which demanded the lively Italian "*Ciribiribin*." But its laughing music seemed to draw sobs from her throat. It was not until she picked out Massenet's "*Elégie*" that harmony finally met her mood, and its hopeless heart-break came to one in a gondola, in the words:

"O doux printemps d'autrefois  
Vers tes saisons  
Vous avez fuit pour toujours!  
Je ne vois plus le ciel bleu,  
Je n'entends plus, les chants joyeux  
Des oiseaux.

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## *The Strength to Yield*

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En emportant mon bonheur,  
O, bien aimée, tu t'en es allée,  
Et c'est en vain, que revient le printemps!  
Oui, sans retour avec toi, le gai soleil  
Les jours rians sont partis!  
Tout est flétri,  
Pour toujours!"

The words had scarcely left her lips when she heard steps at the open gate in the wall, and Cenari was bowing low before her.

"Signore! Signore! Had I wanted to see you, or any one, to-night, I should have gone with Cordelia to the Colbrizzi."

"Instead of which you called me from there, with your singing—served *à la* Pyramis and Thisbe through the wall. Mrs. Gunter knew your voice, even before I told her, you see. You have forgotten the nearness of the Colbrizzi garden. A voice carries far on such a night. It is the spontaneity that I love."

She got up and bowed. "You? Indeed, indeed!"

"Do you doubt it? It was that which brought me here. I made a pretext to leave *è così, è finita la musica*."

"Yes," mocked Dorris, "*è finita la musica*. I told you so this afternoon."

"But remember '*La Donna è Mobile*,'" he laughed, "which you only began. I see you *are* modest in singing about yourself."

"Suppose, signore," suggested Dorris, "that we select some one language to converse in. Personally, this method of mixing phrases from ever so many tongues is tiresome to me."

"What is that you say?"



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She repeated what she had said with emphatic variations.

"Exactly, signora. You are in my mood. *Mirabile dictu*, I agree."

"But no dead languages may be admitted either. As we are in Venice, let us dwindle into Italian."

"I should say," remarked Cenari, cynically, "that any dwindling would be into English."

"I thought you were too much of a gentleman to insult my native tongue."

Dorris stared at the fountain.

"As that is American, I am doing no harm. But where does the discussion of race or tongue lead? You and I possess the same sentiments. Any language will convey our thoughts—even the wireless one which telegraphed your message to me to-night."

"How nice it must be," said Dorris, "how very, very satisfactory, to be conceited enough to be sure it was sent."

"Well, at least you sent a prayer to *Santa Maria*. I was saying, 'Where does the discussion of race or tongue lead?' "

"Where does anything lead?" Dorris asked quizzically, at last. "Where do my worry and unrest lead? What difference will it make fifty years hence? Who will care?"

"Care for what?"

"Whether I loved or hated you; whether I yielded or renounced; whether I tasted the bitter-sweet of love and felt the awakening, or put you out of my life," was Dorris's reply.

"No one will care, Mrs. Van Lennep," replied Paolo, "no one except Eros. He will feel it intensely fifty years hence."

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"Do you think so?" she asked. "No, Eros has been spurned too often. If I spurn him now, he will merely grin and pass on to his next victim. That is his way."

"You are a singular girl," he remarked, "I cannot quite make you out."

"Well, that is the first essential in the ethics of flirtation: Convey the thought to the desired victim, that he, she or it is an enigma. The flattery of it sometimes works wonders. Don't talk like that to me!"

"Pray don't give me philosophy, not on a summer night in Venice. Wait for a rainy day, in London or New York!"

"Hm-m," laughed Dorris, "as if you and I would ever meet in London or New York. How absurd!"

"Did you really take my remark seriously? Why you said good-bye forever to me this afternoon!"

"For how long do you propose keeping up this cheerful banter? For my part, it is beginning to get dull. Signore"—

Cenari drew a whistle from his pocket and blew it three times.

"*Are you mad?*" asked Dorris.

"To be sure—to be sure! You see I merely whistled for my gondolier. He may be out of calling distance. I couldn't shout, particularly when you were beginning to get bored," he said, and walked to the steps at the gate.

"I suppose you in turn have taken me seriously, and are going?" asked Dorris, a little annoyed.

"You have guessed. I'm sure the guitar would amuse you far more than I. My studio is in a shocking condition, and my work has been neglected ever since I saw your aureoled face."

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The disappointed Dorris was playing with a branch among the bushes.

"Is it as bad as that?" she asked. "Am I such a fiend?"

The gondola was at the steps.

"You are really going?" she asked, giving him her most bewitching smile.

He stooped and kissed her hand respectfully.

"Good-night, *Marchesa*," he said.

She tried to speak, to call him back, to give him some word of encouragement, but her lips were mute. The gondola was on its way, leaving little ripples in its course. Dorris, stupefied, stood on the steps and watched it disappear.

An unaccountable impulse seized her. She ran back to her seat in the bushes and found herself singing Shelley's "Indian Serenade," very softly and quite low. She put a bit of coquetry in her singing, and raised her voice a trifle at the lines,—

"I arise from dreams of thee  
And a spirit in my feet  
Hath led me, who knows how,  
To thy chamber-window, Sweet!"

She was singing to Paolo, and she knew he had heard.

On her way back to the sleeping palace, she remembered Cordelia. Why was she not at home? It must be late, owing to the darkness of the rooms. She thought she might at least light up the ballroom for her, and with that intention she stole into her own room, where she groped for matches and a candle. Passing through Cordelia's again, she stumbled upon a shoe, and holding the candle high, found her dear friend soundly sleeping. She



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made her exit noiselessly, wondering *how* Cordelia had entered without her knowledge.

When she had regained her room, she drew a big chair before a window and stared down the canal into the beautiful stillness that reigned supreme.

"I sang him the 'Indian Serenade.' Will he come? Will he come in his gondola to my 'chamber-window'? Oh, God! *will* he come?" And so she sat, thinking the thoughts of youth.

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It was with the "Indian Serenade" ringing in his ears that Cenari ordered his gondolier to turn into a small canal.

"Now as fast as ever you can, Tita," he said, "to the Caffé de la Bella Venezia." Then as the music grew fainter and more faint, he leaned back and smiled.

The gondolier briskly turning the boat first into this canal, then into that, finally came to the Murano Lagoon, and from thence rowed into an almost unfrequented *rio*.

Already Cenari was in sight of the old palace in which was the café famous for rendezvous. Another gondola was drawn up at the steps, and at sight of Cenari, a cloaked figure leaped with the grace of a young lioness from her seat into the court.

"You said midnight," she remarked, as he greeted her with a nod, and they paused together a moment at the entrance of the palace before ascending the stairs to the café.

"How long have you been waiting?" he asked in French.

"I came before midnight, but it wasn't because I didn't know I'd have time to spare, you being so virtuous—I mean punctual in the matter of minutes."

They were going up the stairs by this time.

"Well, Ventriss," he said, "it's good to have 'one virtue linked with a thousand crimes.' And you were sure I wouldn't be late?"

"The compliment of having you come before would have overwhelmed me," said the woman smiling, as they entered the café and took seats near a window.

"How have you been? I haven't seen you for some time," he remarked as they looked each other over superciliously.

"I suppose you didn't get me here to say that?"

"But you are looking well."

"As barbaric as ever, signore?"

"Tell me all about everything," he added, pausing a moment to give the waiter an order. Then when they were again alone: "You find it very amusing to go up and down the canal, do you not? Spend lots of *lire* on handsome gondoliers, dodging in and out of this place and that. Strange that one doesn't tire of that sort of thing. I have been young myself."

"You are still young enough to be facetious, signore—I might almost say impertinent."

"Don't halt at the 'almost,' Ventriss. I am not sensitive. But when handsome women follow me in covered gondolas at night, and even take seats near me at dinners, it makes me nervous. Come, now, Ventriss—before we drink on it, what's the game?"

"Cenari, nervous?" She laughed uproariously. "Why, if I could keep up with your conquests, it would make me dizzy."

"Well, don't by any means get dizzy. It would annoy me very much, and might prevent my being shadowed,—

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which is exciting. Come, now, Ventriss, I am not tossing dice. Who put you on?"

"Bah, Cenari, don't be a fool. The lady is too thin."

"For your taste, maybe. But to what lady do you refer just now?"

"I don't wonder you are curious. The little American, so pale, so charming,—but no temperament, and too hopelessly *au naturel*."

"One would think you wanted her served up *a la carte*, but I am completely in the dark, Ventriss. Can't you be more explicit?"

"Why should I?" laughed the woman as the waiter drew near once more. Then disregarding the intrusion of the third party, went on, obviously to Cenari's annoyance, "To think the well-proportioned, bright-eyed Venetian should have *her* for a rival. Oh, she is too English."

"I am afraid, Ventriss," sipping champagne, which she swallowed in a gulp, "that you are not artistic. But why espouse the cause of Venetian ladies? Your Levantine ideals may incline you to less perfect loveliness, and as for the English, the *too* English,—even Ventriss shouldn't smite the hand that pays the *lire*. Have you seen her ladyship lately?"

"I wasn't referring to Lady Blanchard."

"I know it, but I am. Come, Ventriss, how much did she give you for shadowing me? You see she would have a delicacy about stating the sum—to me."

"I haven't noticed anything like that about her; I should think she'd be rather careful of it. Delicacy is scarce."

"When are you going to Paris, Ventriss?" he asked.

"Do you remember that night at Abbaye? For a long



time the laughing eyes and loving arms of the women of Levantine and French extraction delighted me."

"Yes, I believe you."

"You dined alone that night, just as you dined at the Grand Hotel, by the way."

"I thought you were coming to that."

"And I thought," said Cenari, lowering his voice, as he heard the voices of new-comers on the stairs, "that we might possibly talk alone. Why, it's George Peabody, of Boston. And I've seen the lady, too. Can't place her. But they are Americans, Ventriss."

"Evidently. I wonder why their men can't seem ever to have any fun without getting drunk."

Somewhat to Cenari's surprise, Mr. Peabody had recognized him and was on his way to greet him. The Italian rose.

"On my life—Cenari, the painter!" he almost shouted. "Mrs. Lane, let me introduce him to you. Mrs. Lane, this is Cenari, the man who painted Lady Somebody-or-other in London. I forget these confounded titles, but it had something to do with an exhibition."

Ventriss stared as Mrs. Lane sat down beside her, and Cenari looked at Mr. Peabody.

"Have you been in Venice long?" he inquired.

"Got here yesterday. Do you stay here all the year round?"

"I manage to get out now and then," said the Italian, smiling. "My place of abode is Rome. I judge from your tone you're not to remain."

"Why, there's nothing here but American girls and pigeons, but—ah, there's the waiter! What'll you have, Mrs. Lane?"

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The order was given, and Mrs. Lane looked startled. Mr. Peabody leaned over confidentially to her, and Cenari and Ventriss exchanged glances.

"There's one thing," said Mr. Peabody, lifting his glass, "they say Mrs. Teddy Gunter's in Venice, living alone in some old house."

"And here's the boy with our supper," laughed Cenari. "Now, we'll all be happy." He rose as if to readjust his chair, and tactfully made a place for Mr. Peabody near Ventriss, smiling at his duplicity; for Ventriss was not in the mood to be bored.

He found Mrs. Lane adaptable. She liked Venice "very much." But Peabody would insist in breaking in upon their talk.

"I have heard," he said, "a lot about that Bedford girl that caught Harry Van Lennep. Strange how news travels. Boston hears everything."

"Enterprising place, like all American communities. But what has Boston to say? Venice finds Mrs. Van Lennep delightful."

"Does, eh? Well, she'd better go home to her husband. They say there's queer work here, and Van Lennep's talking a good deal to lawyers. Shouldn't be surprised if there's a divorce in the wind. Teddy Gunter's wife came over to patch it up."

"So serious as that," said Cenari's suave voice. "Well, well, the ladies are taking it very coolly, even thinking of returning home, I hear."

Both Ventriss and Cenari were relieved to be alone in her gondola at last.

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## *The Strength to Yield*

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"Americans!" the woman grumbled. "I told you they were impossible."

Cenari laughed softly.

"To make up for a misspent evening, tell me now what I want so much to know—about Lady Blanchard."

As he spoke he glanced involuntarily toward the Specchio-Torni palace in the distance, and ordered the gondolier to change his course.

"The gate in the wall is open," said Ventriss, following his glance. "An invitation. Won't you flit over and hear about Lady Blanchard's jealousy to-morrow?"

"So she's jealous, is she? I am flattered! But if she knew *this*, she would shift her objective point. Come, Ventriss, before I know particulars"—

He leaned over and kissed her.



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## *The Strength to Yield*

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### CHAPTER XXIV.

Oh, the little more, and how much it is!  
And the little less, and what worlds away!  
How a sound shall quicken content to bliss,  
Or a breath suspend the blood's best play,  
And life be a proof of this!

—By the Fireside.

Dorris waited through the midnight hours, but Paolo did not come. She had pictured him beneath her window—she had heard him say "*Buona notte!*" for the twentieth time, but her thoughts had been as elusive as her dream of the Indian desert. Yet still she waited, till she grew cold and numb in the late dampness. Her eyes scanned the palaces up and down the canal, as she fancied the city born anew. All the tales she had known of Venice and its love-stories, from her early childhood, flooded her mind. She saw all the heroines of her boarding-school days.

Yet now no gondola disappeared into a small canal, on an errand of intrigue or diplomacy; no music came to her ears in the early morning. The decaying marble houses, dim, and for the most part unoccupied, were the only proof that here there had been a city of mirth and song. After all, she felt it was her extreme youth that had urged her to expect Paolo, a twentieth century portrait painter, to come to her *palazzo* for the purpose of serenading her. Those days were dead, she knew, yet her thoughts took their channels in streams of laughing maidens, courtly gallants and singing gondoliers.

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She told herself to wake up to reality, and above all to modernity, that she was quite impossible and childish for deliberately losing her night's rest, for thinking of a man! Once between her sheets, she tried to divert her thoughts by studying the shadows in the corners, but accusing sinister voices seemed calling to her from everywhere. They were the voices of centuries departed women of this city, laughing and scoffing at her for her weakness. One seemed to be pointing to the white hairs of Dorris's old age, and to her grinning, wrinkled face; another was speaking of the goodly feast of youth. They were telling her of *her* cowardice, and *their* strength! They were calling her a Puritan woman, who would be as miserable in the yielding as in the renunciation. One called out that twenty summers had not enfolded themselves about her yet! That life at best was a little day! She knew they despised her, one and all.

"Voices of temptation," she moaned, as she buried her head in her silk pillow, "cease tormenting me!"

A faint sleep stole upon her at last, from which she awoke as the first rosy tints of dawn chased away the black of night. A hope that it was a morning of her seventeenth summer that was breaking, took possession of her, before she realized she must live another day of hopeless conflict with heart and mind.

As her eyes found the smiling ones of her father, while she was lighting the candles, she felt keenly the potency of the new love, that had for a short time almost erased the memory of that dear, dead friend. She kissed the handsome face in the frame, and passed into Cordelia's room, where she crept into bed beside her. The coolness of the contact woke the sleeping woman, who thrust one

arm about the girl, making a pillow of her other one for the golden head. The restlessness of her past night, the yearning for sympathy moved Dorris to tenderness, when she held Cordelia's face in her hands.

"Poor, sweet Cordelia," she murmured, "I have neglected you much of late; I have not been considerate of you—no, and I have thought little of Daddy. But I am going to change. Oh, Cordelia! a new and undreamed-of sorrow has come to me. *It is calamity!* Mr. Barker was right. How sweet and loving he was; how kind and tender! I can almost forgive him for being the means of Daddy's sorrow. Oh, why did I ever come to Venice? Why didn't I go back with Harry? Oh, Cordelia, I am so unhappy!"

Had Mrs. Gunter been less familiar with Dorris's temperament, she might have pursued a conversation on the subject—even have chided her; but her tact tended toward the comforting of the child she had practically brought up. She merely whispered words of encouragement and tightened her arm about her.

"We all have trials, dear. Let me help you. It is all right, sweet. All will be for the best. Get some sleep if you can."

"Cordelia," breathed Dorris, "the bromides. I must sleep. I *must*. I have only rested for an hour or so, no more, and I struggled against my sleeplessness. Won't you give me a dose, dear?"

"No, Dorris. The times when one is most tempted, when one is miserable and unhappy, are those when it is best to deny oneself. If you stem your longing for an unnatural sleep when it is the most difficult, it will be easier, far easier in the ordinary course of events. No,



you must obey me. I will not give you the bromide now. It is dangerous to encourage that habit. You may not have it till the nerves trouble you. It is only for that I let you get this sleep medicine at all. You are not nervous now? Tell me the truth."

"No, Cordelia," she said, turning over; "no, I will not lie to you. It is not nerves; but oh, my poor head—how it throbs; and my heart,—how it aches! Oh, Cordelia, please relieve me! Not a full dose. Please!"

It would have pleased Cordelia to see the troubled child sleep, and momentary weakness and feminine sympathy made her refusal difficult. To see her beautiful Dorris suffer caused a deep emotion in her own heart. She knew she could alleviate the pain and heart-ache, but saw the temptation in its true light. She began singing an old lullaby to her, that her own infancy had known. She labored over Dorris to conquer her insomnia as she might have over a lost lamb or her own baby. Something of the divinity of motherhood the girl felt in Cordelia's cooing; and for the first time in her life she marvelled at maternity. She could see her dead mother clasping her close in her arms, as she was being soothed by this lovely lullaby. At length her nerves became rested, the pains in the head were being driven far away, and she sank into a deep slumber, dreaming of a golden babe.

Deftly, Cordelia loosened her grasp, rose and drew the window curtains together. She passed out of the room softly, and into Dorris's room, where she sank upon the bed. Tears that she hated, that had never been her weakness, filled her eyes. Her throat felt dry and heavy. She fought against the demon in vain, and cried as passionately as Dorris had done that night after the dinner

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## *The Strength to Yield*

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at Casa Malvoni. What she was most striving for was that Dorris would be awakened without her aid, to the cynicism and insincerity of what she now saw through rose-coloured windows.

Cordelia had learned that lesson, the lesson that breaks the hearts of most people, and when learned drives all their youth away. Many people go through life almost without mastering it. They are the people who are gifted with so much health and good spirits, that the mere joy of living makes it great to exist. If they do, it shatters their idols and steals Hope itself from their hearts.

It has been truly said by a great man, that "he who loves raves, 'tis youth's frenzy," and it is only in very early youth that we love for love's sake; before the gross hypocrisy and superficiality of men and women are made manifest, and have sharpened a dagger against the possible malice with which we may have to fight. Those persons, who, in the unawakened period, offer great friendship, are so certain of receiving it, that the possibility of being cheated never enters their thoughts. When the knowledge does come they deem it a mistake, and when the truth at last asserts itself, life has lost most of its joy for them.

Cordelia had been of this class. The infidelity of her husband had cast a cloud over her first youth, and poisoned her against humanity. Then the dusty road of common sense, which is the salvation of many women, helped her to bear this and the loss of Dorris Goodwood, for her greatest grief had passed by that time. From that day forth, she expected nothing from anybody, and if she did receive anything, was merely pleased. Her yard-measure of suspicion was so well proportioned that it did not even

pass Dorris by after years of comradeship and understanding. Yet she was disappointed,—bitterly disappointed, as she lay between the girl's sheets, and for the first time in twenty years! She had always had a prescience that Dorry was more to her than a good friend, but she had not encouraged it, dreading the day of disappointment that might come. Yet now she knew that Dorris was the only real factor in her life, for she was childless. Something of her old alarms and dread of the truth filled her, and she felt she had not quite hardened herself against the *genus homo*. She realized it had not been a deep interest she felt for Dorris, but a great human love, that sacrifices and suffers for its object.

Perhaps the knowledge that she had failed in her resolutions and loved Dorris too well, had been the cause of her tears. Who knows? And who can fathom the why of a woman's tears? The strongest among them succumb to them. Cordelia was a splendid one—one who had tasted of all that life offers, except motherhood. The friendship of such women is worth striving for.

She sat up in bed and watched Aurora gild the City—the City that had borne so much! Something of its history of splendour filled her whole being, as she gazed at the reflection of her own faded beauty in the mirror. Venice had its secrets, but she had hers also. The great force had not passed her by. As she studied her face, she fancied she saw upon it the expression she wore the night she had danced in Vienna with a celebrated prince. How long, long ago it seemed! She remembered his words of flattery, saw again his glance of admiration.

Then flashed up her school days and Dorry Goodwood. She was walking again with her through Florentine gar-



dens, their arms entwined, their hair in long, graceful braids. They were talking once more their cherished talks, speculating about life. Then the tragedy came up before her, her own love affair strangely entangled in it; the grief brought about by both.

Theodore was talking to her once more in the garden at Boston; yes, he was even asking her to be his wife. The long desired proposal had come, and a little startled cry escaped her, as she felt his kiss! Then Roland Barker seemed to be smiling across the mirror. All the friends of her vanished youth were encircling around her, and always the nearest were those composing the curious triangle, Dorry, Fitzgerald, and the fascinating Mr. Barker. The days of her girlhood had not thrust themselves before her since she had told Dorris of the melancholy taint in her blood. She was not a woman of dreams. It might have been a semblance of her old self she had seen in her reflection that turned them to light. The weakness was passed, but Cordelia was certain she would give up her very soul to be twenty again.

"*'Si jeunesse savait, si vieillesse pouvait,'*" she mused stepping out on one of the balconies, and that was confuted by—" *'On ne peut-être jeune, qu'une fois.'*"

The puffing of a steamboat told her the world was beginning to awake, and she returned cautiously to her own room, chiding herself for having forgotten her kimono and slippers. She turned to face Maria.

"We will not breakfast till ten, to-day, Maria," she said, "be sure the rolls are nice and hot, and do not neglect the mail as you did yesterday."

It was Dorris who woke Cordelia up, two or three hours after, for she had nestled into bed beside her. Her

white face showed nothing of the strain of the past night, as she greeted Cordelia smilingly. Her eyes were bright, and her lips their highest crimson.

"Lazy Cordelia," she said, "get up."

"No, Dorris," she answered, "come and rest till Maria brings up the tray. I sent her to the Piazza for mail. *Qu'il sa!* there may be some interesting letters."

"You mean for *you*. You see I haven't a sufficient number of interesting friends to be excited about my correspondence, and you have!"

They chatted on gaily till Maria came with their coffee and rolls. Dorris received only one letter to the other's five.

"Cordelia," she remarked, "this is from Harry. It looks thicker than usual. It has for all the world the appearance of a *billet doux*."

"And why shouldn't it be, Dorris? One's husband is privileged to write love-letters. Perhaps it is. I really think you are educating Harry."

Cordelia scrutinized Dorris's face as the girl read,—

BOSTON, FRIDAY.

*Dear Dorris:—*

I suppose I should have cabled, but you have written so seldom, and apparently had no interest whatever in my affairs, that I thought it might be better to wait and write, for it is going to be disappointment. You see I have given you two weeks extra time for dreaming, by not cabling. Now it must cease.

My father died last week, and is now buried. The dates and particulars will not interest you in the least, so I will not bore you with them. It was sudden and unexpected, for father was apparently in splendid condi-

tion for him and getting along famously,—a stroke, and his death has left mother in a terrible condition. The doctors fear nervous prostration. The various business interests and deals father was engaged in, and the fact that his will has left me executor, render my crossing to join you as we had planned, an impossibility. I do not ask you to return—I command you! You have had your fun, and I'm not the least bit sorry about it, but I want you with me for many reasons.

In the first place I am rather a laughing-stock. You know the manner people have of winking, when a chap's got a stunning wife gallivanting around Europe, while he's in a dull city attending to his father's affairs, etc. I hate to hear you spoken of in such a way, for I know you are no more of a flirt than Edna Waters. Still I want you here. It is not selfishness for I have gone without you for some time. I rather miss your smile and your kissing lips. We'll try to be very happy together when we meet again. We must both forgive lots, but you must come! Every day for over a month, mother has said to me, "I told you so. You ran off and married her, now you must suffer. I ask you, 'How do you know who she's running around with? If she'd elope with a man, she'd do anything!'" I have tried to explain to her the sheer absurdity of this, but she seems to think every girl who's as damned good-looking as you, is out for a good time. She at least can't say you married me for money, when I tell her you hate to be kissed (a hatred, by the way, you are going to get over)!

I hope Mrs. Gunter has succeeded in piling some sense in your noodle.

Dorris frowned.



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Don't be quite so poetic, and you'll find yourself a lot better off. It's all superficial rot, anyway—this dreaming about antiquities, poets, etc. It's not real! Please forget about it, and above all things, do not start to scribble yourself! That would be the last straw.

It's a fortunate thing for you that you hate the newspapers. You would have read of father's death. One's fund of information is never correct, or, I would say *good*, without their aid.

Cable me when you're coming, and no nonsense about it! I won't have the boys jolly me any more—it's ridiculous! We'll go over again next summer maybe, and in the meantime you can visit in New York and Washington, or go to California if you like. I am willing and ready to do all for you in my power, but you must live with me, not away from me. We have been married such a short time that you really can't tell whether you're happy or not. Come back, honey, and you'll find we'll be great friends. I also want you to know mother better, dear. You ought to know each other well.

Remember, cable right away. I shall wait patiently for word from you, and will run to New York to meet you. Then we will stop at the house there and get it renovated for our winter visits, though, of course you cannot go out, owing to the fact that we are in mourning. It might be advisable to get some black clothes in Paris, on your way through. Get the first boat you can, and good luck to you!

I'll meet you with one of the cars at the dock.

Give my best regards to Mrs. Gunter!

Your loving husband,

HARRY.

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Not sure of the date. Too lazy to find out!

H.

Dorris handed the letter to Cordelia.

"No, Dorris," she said, "that is not loyal. It is unkind. If there is anything that displeases you, tell me. You didn't mean that, Dorris, did you? You wouldn't pass your husband's letter for me to read?"

"Cordelia," she remarked, sharply, "I didn't expect you were ever going to give me Sunday-school sermons. You once refused to read his letter—but read this! Why do you try to make me feel small? I know what I am about."

"What is it, Dorris?" she asked.

"Well," she answered, "it's a good thing I've had my breakfast already. I certainly couldn't have eaten a thing after *that*!"

"What is it?"

"Harry's father is dead!"

"When do we have to start back, Dorris?"

For answer she laughed.

"What do you mean?" asked Cordelia.

"Why, Cordelia," she said, "do you suppose I am going back? back to go through a year of mourning and boredom? back to Harry? back to everything I hate? No, Cordelia, I'd sooner die! I'd sooner take prussic acid like my mother—I tell you, I would, I would! He says I can stay in New York or Washington, or even go to California! He's mad, mad! He says we must renovate the New York residence, though of course we can't go out! that I must get my mourning clothes in Paris, on my way back! He hopes you have piled some sense in

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my noodle—yes, *noodle*, that was the word of his selection! He spoke sarcastically about my not wanting to know about his father. Why couldn't he have cabled me, as any other man would have done? Above all, *why* did I marry him?"



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## *The Strength to Yield*

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### CHAPTER XXV.

Spirit of Beauty! tarry yet awhile,  
They are not dead, thine ancient votaries,  
Some few there are to whom thy radiant smile  
Is better than a thousand victories,  
Though all the nobly slain of Waterloo  
Rise up in wrath against them! Tarry still,  
there are a few!

—*The Garden of Eros.*

Felno rowed with alacrity to Signor Bonti's office. Dorris left the gondola and entered. Signor Bonti was out, but was expected any minute, and if the signora would wait, Zorzi was certain it would not be for long. It was a hot morning, so she asked for a chair and seated herself beside the steps on the dingy canal, to await the agent. Old clothes were hanging on a line, suspended from the tumbling down house opposite to the rooms above.

"What a strange thing," she mused, "this is dirt, but it is the most picturesque dirt I have ever seen, and even that tumbled down place over there, with the water drenching the court, the roof leaning over at an absurd angle, is marble! Even in this deserted canal, Venice was beautiful long ago. Poor houses! they are all levelling to the waters. They are tottering. Some day they will fall, and some day the entire city will have fallen, with Adria's waters and the clumsy piles the only proof of this once dazzling city. Yet in dying, it wears a smile.

"Still, I suppose this is the history of nations, as well as races. Strange that when a country or city is at its zenith of glory, flourishing in the fine arts, and in every cult of beauty, when it has attained the highest culture

and produced great monuments to commerce, that it is beginning to decline. Take Egypt, Tyre, Greece and Rome—the same with them all. It is true that ‘there is no hope for nations,’ and is there for people? When a man has acquired great knowledge, and the art of living, he is too old to put either to use. When a woman, in the prime of her beauty, begins to learn the truths and lessons of life, when she knows the rules of the game, how to finesse, how to play a hand well, weak in suit, the honours are taken away. Instead of the ace or queen, the ten spot offers itself only occasionally; then a nine may turn up often, and so on down the numbers till at length she holds but one trump, and though credited with great ability and brains, it is nevertheless generally admitted that a still greater power is gone—the soft curves, light step, gay heart and irresponsible spirit have vanished, leaving only the smile that plays about the eyes. I have not thought very much about the cruelty of life. It has always seemed so beautiful to me. Dear Cordelia, if my youth went hand in hand with her sense! It must be the law of compensation, as Paolo told me. We always pay a price for what we get. I hope every one does—

“How caressing the water over there is as it splashes around the sunken steps. It has wooed them till the green sea-weed is like a mantle thrown over them. What a weird yet attractive colour it is, seen through the water, and what dirty water, but a nice dirty!”

Signor Bonti turned into the canal, rowing his *sandolo*. He spoke courteously to Dorris.

“Signor Bonti,” she said, “I have troubled you very much about the other story of our palace, and as there are no tenants still, may I have the key again? I fancied

I should like to roam through the rooms to-day, as I know of no other way of passing my time."

The little man hastened to do her a civility.

"And, Signor Bonti," she continued, "Oh, Signor Bonti, I forgot to ask you before. What is that strange decorated thing on the second floor? It is set in *intaglio*. Is there something secret about it?"

"Yes, signora," he replied, "that was the poison closet of the Torni family. There are still the same bottles, the same daggers they used to employ. If the signora would like I will send for Signor Bencio. He and I, alone know the workings of the mysterious chest. Even Conte Fania, who owns the whole palace does not know of its existence. If the signora will permit, I will send for him. I would consider it a favour if I could show you this clever bit of work."

"Oh, I should love to examine it," said Dorris, her eyes brightening; "to think I never knew of it before, though I think my father had some speculations about it. Somehow I never took an interest in it. I fancied it was a vault of some sort, but neglected asking you about it."

"If the signora will permit, I will get Bencio immediately. He lives near here, and I'm sure to find him in. There are also some beautiful gowns which may interest the signora. One belonged to the wife of a doge; then there are several of the Torni family. They were for state occasions, and as the embroideries and brocades were priceless, they were concealed. They are most beautiful, signora. On some of them are embroidered precious stones. There are a good many accessories for ladies' attire, that the signora would appreciate better than I,—such as hair ornaments, and so forth."



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"Why, Signor Bonti," exclaimed Dorris, stupefied with delight, "how wonderfully interesting. What is this secret place—a chest? With the poisons separate from the attire?"

"*Si, signora.* That is it exactly. The signora is very clever. The poison closet is composed of five or six shelves, and each one of them is filled with deadly poisons. The Torni closet was supposed to have contained every known poison in the late Renaissance. They are gruesome, signora. The vials and bottles are so old and dusty. They are fantastically moulded. One of the very deadliest poisons is concealed in the rarest of perfumes and encased in a bottle most exquisitely carved. Artificial flowers whose petals once exhaled deadly vapours, and gloves (such as were once used by Marie de Medici to poison the Queen of Navarre, and carefully preserved under glass) interested us particularly. It was most interesting the way we came upon these things. Four or five years ago when Conte Fania put the palazzo up for rent, he came to me. I was, of course, given possession of the keys, and privileged to make a thorough tour of the building so as to enable myself to differentiate between it and the houses on my list. Bencio and I went together one morning. I shall never, never forget that day. He was exploring the upper story, while I remained awe-struck, gazing at the frescoed ball-room. He rushed onto the staircase, and gave a delighted cry. Then he led me to the *intaglio* which was raised on hinges, and showed me his proud find. We examined it carefully; it seems he had been meddling with it out of curiosity, and by mere chance had pressed the spring; a thing which would hardly have happened once in a thousand years. We

experimented with it for some time, and afterward ransacked Italy in the effort to secure information as to the Torni secrets. Books we found in plenty, but most of them told little; at last, in the memoirs of Principe Giovanni Torni, we found a detailed account. Then we examined the closet again, and found our indices for the most part correct. Bencio has those memoirs now. Confident of Conte Fania's ignorance of this mystery, we agreed to keep silence concerning it, and that is how it all came about, signora."

Bonti grinned in quest of approbation.

"So Conte Fania does not know?" asked Dorris. "How splendid! And how good of you to have told me. I may consider myself highly flattered, may I not? Thank you so much, Signor Bonti. You must keep your promise, and show me the case. To-day I am feminine enough to be more interested in the old laces and brocades you spoke of. Why, Signor Bonti, this is like living in a fairy tale; I have only read of such marvels; I never dreamt of experiencing them! Don't tantalize me by delays, signore; send for this Signor Bencio. And Americans say that the modern Italian lives upon the money squeezed from our tourists! Why, you did not even tamper with the jewelled robes! It is incredible—but, oh, excuse me! I didn't mean that. Yet there may be a fortune in them."

"Ah, signora," he said, a note of pathos in his voice, "the Italian aristocracy is degenerating. Look at Conte Fania! His estates are impoverished, he is poor. I was very, very wrong to keep my secret from him, but, fond of art as he is, I knew the finds in the closet would tempt him. I did not wish to put temptation in his way, signora. As you say, there may be a fortune in gems and brocades

there. He might have sold them. The concealed daggers would have brought a great price. Even now he might sell them. Venice is denuded of much—save her marble walls and frescoes. It is better to have the treasures hidden away amidst the dust of ages than to see them leave Venice—worse still, leave Italy! I could not bear to think of foreign hands going over them. They are sacred, and, as I said, valuable. Forgive me for saying foreign. But I could not bear to think of anything *Venetian* being defiled by a race of new people, out of spirit with my city that I love. Now, those poisons, though they awaken cruel imaginings of the past, those dresses, belonged to a family great in history, a family of princes, fighters and lovers. They may have been bad, bad, bad, *but they were Venetians!* No, no, signora, so far as in me lies, the modern spirit shall not ruin the little we have left. Better, far better, the treasures lie undiscovered to the world, oh, far better! The signora loves my city, I know, and so she must see what will give her as much delight as it gave me. Pray forgive me, signora, for having forgotten myself."

"Oh, Signor Bonti," she murmured, "you have made me cry. Yours is the ancient loyalty that I love in song. Forgive you? Why, your patriotic devotion to your country's past makes me proud to know you. Such sentiments to cynics sound like cant, but in your voice rings the true note. It trembled when you said, '*But they were Venetians.*' Ah, signore, there is something the modern world lacks—particularly the modern nations, abounding as they do in politics and commerce—something of a real culture, which even a *cocher* might possess here. Perhaps some day, we of the West will acquire it, but it can never



be the same as that which is innate in you. Such sentiments as yours might be regarded as effeminate by some. Ah, Signor Bonti, how much I love your city, you can never, never know. Don't despair, Signor Bonti. The sense of beauty is not dead. There are those who can weep because they feel what is exquisite so deeply. Signor Bonti, let me shake your hand."

He responded with an air of pleased embarrassment, looking with frank admiration into the brimming blue of her eyes.

"Thank you, signora. Do you prefer to wait here until I summon Bencio, or will you come back a little later? I am entirely at your service in the matter, signora."

"I will take the opportunity to visit the Palazzo Papadopoli where I have not been since I was in Venice last."

On her way thither a few moments later, Dorris was idly considering her power over Bonti, which had evidently led to his revealing the wonders of a private history so interesting and at the same time so sacred to him. Pretty women are accredited with having the world at their feet—and the experience of the past few weeks was causing her to debate with herself how far she may have undervalued her power. For there really could be no doubt that Cenari, being a man, felt the influence which Bonti took no pains to conceal; and his indifference was a cloak—to what? Dorris felt her heart suddenly beating fast as she hurried to fill in the time before she should again see Bonti.

To her doubt and discomfiture, it was of Cenari she was still thinking when, within the hour, she mounted with Bonti and Bencio to the second floor of the Palazzo Specchio-Torni. Bonti carried matches in his pocket, and

an old candelabrum in his hands; and as they drew near the strange *intaglio*, he provided a light.

Then before Dorris realized what was taking place, the cover of the *intaglio* rose on rusty hinges, and a dark, dusty curtain stood revealed. She shuddered as her fingers went out to touch it, and drew back, while Bonti pulled it to one side. Many shelves extended back indefinitely to the obscure wall, and from her position, Dorris could not ascertain their depth. But their contents were a conglomeration of cut-glass vials, grotesque figures which might contain deadly fluids or the rarest incense or be their own excuse by virtue of the intricacy of their design; girdles, daggers, sword-blades, and last but not least, artificial flowers!

The bottom shelf was empty and Bonti tried vainly to remove it; at last it gave way with a crash and showed a chest below. Dorris leaned over eagerly and peered in, to see a vision of rose brocade.

"Gowns!" she exclaimed, falling back in surprise. *Cinque-cento* gowns! Oh, Signor Bonti, *do* let me see them."

The old man smiled, and she waited there while he laid gown upon gown on the marble in front of her, with richly ornamented fans, medallions, and the rarest of laces. Dorris fairly crowed in glee, taking up in turn each thing he handed out, marvelling at its beauty, wondering at its age and history, until something which rivalled it was added to the growing pile under her elbow. For she was kneeling before these glories of some dead-and-gone princess, as at a shrine.

"Do look at this purple velvet mantle bordered with gold and pearls and lined with lavender brocade." Suiting

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the action to the word, she sprang to her feet and threw it over her shoulder, adjusting the folds on the left side.

Bonti and Bencio gave a simultaneous whistle, and one of them threw open with a quick motion the door of a room near at hand.

"Stand before that mirror, signora," she heard Bonti saying, "and see history repeat itself!"

Already she was gazing into the dusty glass, wherein the faint suggestion of imperial purple asserted itself. Disdaining the dust, she drew her hand across the smooth surface, and then posed and pirouetted, while Bonti and Bencio like faithful slaves brought in to her the pile upon the floor in the corridor, and awaited developments with admiring indulgence.

The gown which caused her the most speculation and delight was a heavy pale pink silk studded with pink sapphires and girdled with gems. This she held up against her dress again and again. The lady who had worn it was not so tall as Dorris, but the girl mixed up dreams of Cenari's admiration as an artist with visions of this princess in life. Anyway, this lady had Dorris's own eye for colour—and it was her favourite! She caressed every fold of its silken softness until a mark on the train arrested her attention.

"Some gallant stepped on that hundreds and hundreds of years ago," said Bonti.

"You don't suppose," asked Dorris slowly, "that these have been hidden away ever since the last Torni died?" And in Bonti's reply and the distraction of her attention by a feathered ornament and another robe of splendour, she lost all thought of the poisons which had originated her interest in the *intaglio*.



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"Speaking of fortunes," she laughed, "why, Signor Bonti, you haven't the slightest conception of what these beautiful silks and gems are worth. They would make you as rich as Golconda!"

He laughed at her exaggeration as he carried the robes back and left them in the chest. The purple mantle and the pink brocade had been left on the chair with the ornament for the hair which she had so admired, and were still overlooked as Bonti helped Bencio to readjust the shelf over the chest containing the others.

"And, now," cried the girl, "the poisons!"

From the second shelf she drew a long gold ornament, once used no doubt as a pendant for a girdle.

Bonti looked at it in wonder.

"I know what it was for," said Dorris, delightedly. "It hung from a girdle like the one on the pink brocade."

"Just so," agreed the Italian, and twisted a band at the top. Then he pulled, and a fine steel dagger leaped up as out of its sheath. "Mrs. Van Lennep," he went on, "on this dagger was a poison so deadly that the mere contact of its steel in the slightest of incisions in the human flesh caused death in a few hours. Think of the mystery surrounding such a taking off. I fancy even to-day the poison lingers on the blade."

"What a wonderful piece of workmanship," she said, admiring its construction. "The old Venetians were indeed skillful—in the trade of murder."

Other poison daggers were examined but of less ingenious pattern; and Dorris turned impatiently from them to the cut-glass bottles, showing a little hesitancy at being the first to touch them—but so engrossed in the search that the two men exchanged questioning glances.

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Bonti took from her hands a vial corked in such a manner that she could not find the opening, and replaced it with a showing of haste.

"Has not the signora seen enough of poisons?" he commented with a bow and smile. "That little bottle might give forth fumes to kill. Does the signora court sudden death?"

"What was it?" she asked.

"*Prussic acid*," he responded, with a look at Bencio as she turned her head.

A shudder was convulsing her, and she would not have these men know, but her nerves were tingling to lay her hand upon that vial and in defiance of Bonti run down the stairs with it. Try as she would, she knew that she was staring at it—and that Bonti was watching her in curiosity. Soon her secret would be known, and strangers would come to Cordelia—worse still, to Cenari—and bid them beware of giving her liberty.

Suddenly she wheeled about, and went back into the room where the brocade dress and mantle still lay across the chair.

"Signor Bonti, see," she called in a moment, quite forgetting her distress, "you have forgotten these. Come and see."

He came in alone.

"Forgotten — yes," he said. "I did forget them at first. But now I do not forget. That is the duchess's gown I told you of. The mantle belonged to her husband. No, signora, they go back into the chest no more."

Dorris stared at him.

"Who knows," he continued, "but that you have a better right to them than I, to hold them from Conte Fania?"

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## *The Strength to Yield*

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Who knows but you may be a re-incarnation of that duchess?"

"Signore! Think of the mantle of a doge, the ball-gown of a Venetian duchess! What sacrilege! But what a compliment! What a compliment—to me!"

"There is no one but we three who knows of the existence of these things. And the centuries that have passed! Signora, I am sure a fifteenth century Venetian would have rewarded your admiration by bequeathing to you the gown."

"But, Signor Bonti," she protested, "I do not want to seem ungrateful, but"—

"I understand; you think I have no right to dispose of them. And yet, consider; what right have the living with the things of the dead? or what right has Conte Fania with glories he does not know of, or would scarcely love as you do, if he knew? Suppose we put it another way: Venice herself is the donor. She has been keeping these things hidden for you—for you, alone. I am a Venetian, not alone by birth, but in spirit, and I know whereof I speak. That robe and mantle go back into the chest no more."

The girl sat down and buried her face on her arm, hiding her tears. When she lifted her head, the dust which she had wiped from the mirror was streaked across her face.

"Signor Bonti, you make a baby of me; you touch me so very deeply. You would not dispose of these things yourself, but you would give them to me—to a woman who merely has rented the palace through your intercession. Why not give them to some friend who loves beauty as I do, yet would shudder to take them from Venice?"



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Signor Bonti lifted the garments upon his arm, and carried them out of the room and down the staircase, for all the world as he might have carried his own child. As Dorris followed at his heels, she noted in a passing glance the streak of dust on her face, and this—with the thought of Bonti's determined air—momentarily diverted her.

At the door of the ball-room, the Italian paused and divested himself of the treasures he carried.

"We cannot leave them here," she laughed. "I suppose it means that they are really mine. Signor Bonti, may I keep the key to that room up there? I love to wander where my father spent so many happy hours."

For answer he put the bulky iron in her hand.

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### CHAPTER XXVI.

Though thy soul with my grief was acquainted,  
It shrunk not to share it with me.

—*Stanzas to Augusta.*

"Dorry, dear," said Cordelia, in the afternoon of the day when the girl had visited the poison closet, "let's drift off somewhere until evening. Felno hasn't had much to do lately, and he ought to feel in condition to take us cheerfully through every canal, and across and back both lagoons. What do you say to that? We have had no sight-seeing at all this summer. Why not visit some of our old haunts?"

"Just as you like, Cordelia. I would do anything to get into the sun. Besides, I am restless; there is nothing happy in me."

They changed their gowns for dainty white batiste ones. Dorris wore her flowered hat and carried her favourite pink parasol, and complained bitterly of boredom and the sultriness of the day as they left the Spechio-Torni steps. Everything one had to do seemed to bear some outlandish relation to dressing and moving about, when one would rather rest—if rest in solitude were possible.

"Anywhere and everywhere," was Cordelia's order to Felno. "We want to drift all afternoon, and you know how to make that as agreeable as we can tell you. So we leave it to you."

Dorris laughingly chided her friend for the mistakes she made in Italian. "Sometimes you are quite impossible, Cordy, dear," she said.

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They crossed the canal and entered one of shaded coolness. The gondolier seemed to be in full sympathy with their mood. The motion of the gondola was in harmony with it. The oar skimmed the water, and they sped on as lightly and irresponsibly as a bird whose wing just grazed the surface. There is nothing quite so soothing, so luxurious as this motion, this drifting of the old-time gondola. The exquisite rhythm, the ease, and the silence influenced Dorris for the time like passages in a symphony; and she was quite irritable when Cordelia broke in upon her reverie by inquiring—apropos of nothing—just what she proposed to do.

Dorris frowned and was silent. The boat drifted on, Felno making first one turn, then another, and at last choosing a long, narrow canal bounded by garden walls with overhanging vines.

"What am I going to do?" Dorris asked at last. "Do you see those vines? Well, I am going to stay here to see them turn a golden brown. I shall see the city in the grip of winter, too. But first, I think of the autumn, more glorious than the spring."

Cordelia forced a smile, as she said, "Well, of course, I did not ask whether you would see autumn before winter. But you will see it in America, will you not?"

"I sometimes think it may be destiny, and that so far as I am concerned America is erased from the map."

"Oh, Dorris, dear! I cannot bear to leave you behind. And Harry expects a cable from you any day now. We could catch a steamer at Naples or go to Cherbourg or Havre"—

"Or Liverpool or Southampton, or"—

"Dorris, won't you consider your position carefully?"



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"How?"

"The relation of your present conduct to your future happiness."

"Why not the relation of my present happiness to my future conduct. There is more point to that, you see. Cordelia," her voice sinking and becoming more serious, "I am as happy as I ever can be, considering the change that has come over me. And I do not mean to stir."

"Well, if you are trying to make your life a poem, if you are convinced that you are not made for the hum-drum existence that most of us women have to endure,—I know how you can succeed. Not a lyric poem, but an epic."

"Epic, is it? Dear me, what next? In such a beautiful place, too!"

"What is your aim in life, Dorris? Have you no ambition? Is your life to go on like this" —

"I sincerely hope *not*, Cordelia; but whatever I am thinking of will amount to nothing. I am too weak."

"Are you sure you don't mean 'too strong'?"

"No, thank goodness! I know better. I mean w-e-a-k, weak."

Cordelia sighed: "It is too bad."

"You seem to know all about it, Cordelia."

"Yes, Dorris, I do. Do you suppose I could have watched your transformation from the shapeless caterpillar to the chrysalis and thence into a gorgeous butterfly with golden wings, without knowing the stages, without knowing almost to a certainty where you are now?"

Dorris looked at her eagerly.

"Then if you know it all so well,—if you understand so thoroughly, tell me this: What would you do if we were to change places this instant?"

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"That is what I have been trying to figure out for ever so long, girlie; and I think I know."

"Well, for goodness' sake, go on."

"You are a bride of one man, in love with another; at least with an imitation of a man."

"That is pretty hard, from you."

"Never mind. He knows it himself—what I think of him. I have made no secret of it. It amuses him. Now, leaving out the question of difference in age, heredity, nationality, leaving out even the question of social decency, of religion as even this man understands it, of honour, of law,—I say, leaving these things out, and consider in the abstract, a woman married to one man and in love with another, what would you think of her? That she ought to fly in the face of Providence and ruin her life, or as the poet sayeth, 'flee from the wrath to come?' Come, now; answer me."

"You are getting merry, Cordy." Dorris stared at a passing boat for a moment. Then she looked at her friend who was studying her. "What is the problem you are asking me to solve?"

"The position of a married woman, leaving out details—just considering her duty on its merits, as a practical matter, shunting romance?"

"Duty again? Horrors! Why, even the circumstances are taken into consideration—even they are considered to extenuate the taking of a life, and you ask me to consider a thing which, as you put it, is not *my* problem at all. To ask me what I would think a woman's duty to be who was in love with another man than her husband, and not remember that one man was Harry Van Lennep and the other Paolo Cenari. Why, it is like trumping your part-

ner's ace to go to work on a point like that. And you are much too clever to play in that way, seriously, Cordelia."

"I am playing no game, honey. I am putting the question to you as the world puts it to women. And I wish you would answer it here and now."

"If you put it in that way, of course; a woman who finds herself legally bound should be faithful to the tie. I never thought of it in any other way. To answer your question as the world would ask it, I would have the husband go about with a blunderbuss in his hand and fire in his eye. I would have the woman shown no mercy, as, of course, I could not see any possible excuse for her. And as to the man—the dishonourable scamp who would even look at a married woman!—I would have him skinned alive and hung up to dry."

Cordelia did not smile.

"Seriously, Cordy, it's not like you to try to corner me," the girl went on.

"Dorris, do you suppose that in every single case of this kind, excuses are not made—to the laughter of society—by the woman and by the man? And the husband. He is in this case young, handsome, with a sufficiently good lineage, and the kindest of intentions toward all the world, and especially so toward his wife. He met his fate in a young and beautiful girl whom he had a right to expect would bear his name without reproach. I say the right to expect it, by virtue of her home-training, by the blood in her veins, by the culture which was her birthright. But the girl had something in heredity"—

"Yes," interrupted Dorris, "*that* is my problem."

"Yes. Well, you know it now, if you did not before. Your life with your aunt, however unpleasant, did not



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excuse the wrong you did your husband in marrying him—no, not even if he understood.”

“Oh, Cordelia, that is not it. It is that my husband is Harry Van Lennep who does not even know how to love.”

“Indeed. That is to say, he has not the romantic devotion of a man whose ancestors fought duels in the Renaissance over other men’s wives, while they betrayed their own! No wonder the memory in the blood helps the descendant to play so successfully at love which his ancestors may have felt.”

“But Harry is the essence of the glaringly modern. It sickens me with love itself to consider what he can give me; it is so bloodless. It turns red corpuscles white.”

“Still, the fact remains that many girls would have jumped at the chance he offered to you; that he might have found a wife who would have done her duty, smoothed over the rough parts of life, stood shoulder to shoulder with him. In a word, he might easily have found a wife of whom he might have been proud, who would not have elected to stay behind when he went back to his father’s death-bed.”

“Well, for my part, I sincerely wish he had.”

“We are facing facts, Dorris, not theories,—and if you will let me say it, the threats of heredity.”

“Then what’s the use of trying? Everything that happens was mapped out ages before I was born.”

“You have a chance to change the map. It lies within your will. But Cenari will not help you, remember that.”

“I did not scheme to love him. I did not love him at first.”

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"You needn't tell me that. I know his wiles with women; he would not make any mistakes. He would harp on the string which vibrated loudest—your hatred of the commonplace. Then there were other chords to sound: love of the beauty of life as he knew you would see it with your childish, inexperienced eyes. And all the while he was very much taken up with his own emotions. And the dear, sweet child who thought him so superior to her husband, who analyzed his cleverness at flirtation as almost anything else but the result of long practice, stumbled on and on—into a love that became genuine enough for all his intents and purposes."

Dorris looked at her inquiringly.

"Did you ever stop to consider, Dorris, how many women he has kissed; that every letter he pens, every word he utters, every look he gives, is planned with an eye to—hm, *artistic* detail? I doubt if you were to know, you would care just now; it is so romantic to be deceived, don't you see?"

"You think he has organized a campaign against me," said the girl smiling, with white lips. "I think that is more romantic than for me to think he has not."

"Let us not call it dishonour in him, then; let us suppose he acts on the spur of impulse, the code of his country, on the suggestions which he persuades himself are but the refinement of culture. In what way does that alter *your* position in the matter?"

"I do not understand," stammered the girl.

"Of course not, but you understand that you have laughed at your husband's appeals to return to him; at me for trying to make you see things in their true light. In your nineteen years young, you fancy the wisdom of

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the ages has descended upon you; intelligence is yours—therefore, experience need not cast the balance, not at all. What you cannot reason out by the light of your gigantic intellect is so much nonsense. Gossips get a clutch upon you; and no matter how good a woman may be, gossips will throw lassos; if they do not catch their victim, so much the better for her. Now, I am practical—are you going to do the wise thing? (I avoid saying ‘right’.) Are you going to prove your intellectual development, your good blood? Are you going to stay here and ruin your life, or are you coming with me, back to your husband?”

The boat turned into the Grand Canal. The expression on Dorris’s face puzzled her friend. She was staring straight before her. It must have been at least a minute before she said:

“Cordelia, tell me: Am I that despicable woman you have painted? Am I without heart, cold, and without honour? Tell me that.”

“I have made your eyes to see—have tried to.”

“You have hurt me terribly, you mean.”

“As the surgeon hurts—to effect a cure. You are not merely a pretty woman, Dorris, but a woman whom artists rave over. Such a woman is in danger when she meets *the* artist. I do not necessarily mean an artist who dabbles with paint on canvas. Understand me. Now, Cenari is essentially an artist in his treatment of women. He has an inexhaustible capacity for falling in love—and out again at precisely the psychological moment. If he is sufficiently interested, he lays his snares; and if he catches his little game, he is very tender in his devotion for the length of time his devotion lasts. It really doesn’t take



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any of the spice out of life, this sort of thing. But why take such men seriously?"

"Cordelia, I think you have a very bad mind to think such awful things of men."

"Well, never mind my mind; just think of what I am saying, and whether it is true or false. Inevitably the man neglects and the woman atones. The more clever and elaborate the trap that has been laid, the heartier will be his laughter—afterward. Why, Dorris, for mercy's sake, open your eyes. Mr. Barker anticipated this very thing when he knew you and Cenari would most likely meet. He knew the man, you see."

"How wise all my friends have been for me," said the girl bitterly. "Even Mr. Barker thought me a silly, it seems."

"Mr. Barker tried to prevent a meeting between you and this Italian, not so much because he thought this or thought that, but because he knows life—and men. And he would undo the wrong he so unwillingly did your father, through your mother's perfectly blameless love. The idea of your falling seriously in love probably never occurred to him; but he would save you from anything unpleasant—so very unpleasant as even the mention of your name with Cenari's might come to be."

Dorris's eyes were brimful of tears.

"Here we are at the Palazzo Spechio-Torni," went on Cordelia, her voice dropping into old tenderness. "But we are still drifting, and I want my little Dorris to think more seriously than she has ever done, what the outcome of this game must be."

"You want me to go back—where I can never even see this man again?" pleaded the girl.

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"Dorris, there are only two ways—only one, really, but we will consider another. Would you enter into a *liaison* with this man—make a secret pact with him while your husband is reposing absolute trust in you? Are you raving to that extent, Dorry? I don't for one minute credit it?"

"Sometimes I think," said the girl with a note of hardness in her tones, "that you want so much credit for my turning out well, seeing you brought me up, that you can't see further than your nose! Have you no idea of what this love is that I am fighting hard to overcome? Did you never love any one at all? I can see how the matter stands, perfectly. But I love, and I am not ashamed of it. I love with all my heart and soul. I love so much that I am willing to sacrifice my very soul, my honour, my life,—you, Harry, Heaven, Hell!"

"And all for a man who wouldn't sign his name to a letter."

Dorris faced her with flashing eyes.

"So! You have been mean enough to read my correspondence, eh? I suspected something of that kind. It has been coming to me slowly but surely, that you are a hypocrite, and if there is one vice more than another"—

"Be quiet, Dorris! What are you saying? I tamper with *your* mail. You must be mad. But I see I have guessed right. He is not quite so clever as I imagined, for I supposed he would avoid writing at all. That is generally the game. The accomplished Latin lover will travel usually around the world to see a woman, but never write her a line. A man like Cenari does not seek the society of young girls; he is not a marrying man. He

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would pass by a pretty girl—out of mere selfishness. It would cost him too much to fall in love, but that would not prevent his kissing her on the stairs or compromising her in a way which would not react upon himself. For, once the question of marriage were eliminated, he is no more on his guard than with another man's wife."

"How perfectly horrible, Cordelia. You take all the romance out of life."

"Well, what right has a woman who does not love her husband to wear her heart upon her sleeve? A man who looks upon every woman as fair game sees his justification then; it is really too bad to make things so easy for men. Nature herself has beaten us at that; our supplements are food for laughter."

"Do you mean that if I had not been married, he would not have noticed me?" asked Dorris.

"Oh, he might have had you in his mind more or less as a pretty picture. But do you think he would have made love to you? The utmost he would have done would have been to bide his time."

"Do you mean that he would not have asked me to marry him, if I had been free?"

"Not as long as there are canals on Mars and in Venice."

"Cordelia!"

"The cruelty of men is more subtle than most women get to know, thank God! But, Dorris mine, you can't go through life hugging illusions. You can't stumble along in the twilight. Harry Van Lennep may not be a hero of romance, but he has paid you the compliment of an honourable, high-minded man, in making you his wife, in risking the whims and idiosyncrasies with which a woman of



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your temperament may scatter the best intentions in the world."

"And this is what love really is, to women like you, to men like Cenari—to the world?" cried the girl despairingly. "It is only a beautiful dream to the very young."

"Dorris, you will laugh at this summer ten years hence. You will fancy you must have been mad. You have mistaken desire for love, that is all. Love is different."

"How?"

"You must live it to know. I cannot tell you. But what I know is that men like Cenari *cannot* love. Life avenges itself upon them, after all, and the sweetest things are withheld, because of the waste places of license. Now, Dorris, understand me; you are a married woman, and I will treat you as such. Have you considered for one moment whether, for instance, Cenari would elope with you?"

The girl looked thoughtful.

"Do you think, Dorris, that he is brave enough—unselfish enough—to form one of those lasting attachments which the world forgives? Not Paolo! Why, he would run the other way if your passion for him were not so evident that it guarantees his mastery of the situation. A man who has such a *generous* capacity for affection that he can love a hundred before your time, can love a hundred after you have been shifted from the scene."

Dorris sighed deeply, but still did not speak.

"The very idea of Fitzgerald Bedford's daughter making a spectacle of herself with such a man as Cenari fills me with fervent disgust. You who have given your lips only to your husband, to defile them by contact with

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those of a man capable of valuing them as he values his eternal cigarette? It is really laughable, after all."

"Cordelia, you will break my heart."

"De Musset has said,—

"Le moitié vous aime  
Pour passer le temps."

And because a good-looking artist who has won his place, is tired of old faces and wants a flirtation,—up you bob like a Jack-in-the-box to furnish the material. Oh, you are not the first woman who has been a goose! Dorris, dear, come back with me to America and end this melodrama."

"Cordelia, how can I? How can I after Italy—and all I have experienced here?"

"Our country, Dorris, has yet to make its history; but you know the happiest nations, like the happiest persons, are said to have no history. But it is the great republic of the world; it has new blood, it is experimenting with new policies. It was America, Dorris, who gave the incentive to science by first giving religious liberty to her citizens. We are building up our country. We have not the *salon*, we have not the culture to initiate it. But let some one like you, young, and beautiful, and rich, do her utmost. After all, you are not a Greek or a Hindu or even an Italian; you are an American. We may as well look at things as they are. The world is changing, ideals are shifting, and even kings are not now what they were. Be yourself; cease trying your husband's patience. Show him that you appreciate his trust. How many men would have borne what he has borne from you?"

"Let's think of this some other time, Cordelia."

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"No, now is the accepted time. Renounce this folly, and go back sustained by the knowledge that you gave up something for duty and honour. Duty may be harsh and Anglo-Saxon, but it is the salt of development."

"I dare say you would be happy to see me go back, open up the mildewed Virginia house, and organize yearly hunts after poor little rabbits or something like that."

"You have the means, the looks, the chance to become a social power. Why deliberately throw it away? Establish a delightful circle in New York, and be its most interesting figure. Be the right sort of wife to the husband you have chosen; make him so proud of you that he can deny you nothing. And, Dorris, be a mother; you cannot feel the joy of that until you know it. I love to think of the golden heads of the future which will hide in your lap for evening prayers, whose little lives will be bound up in you. And as they grow up into companions, the eldest boy with your father's name, perhaps, riding in the dear Virginia woods—when the sunset is on your hair, Dorris, dear! And you would plan his whole life and be all in all to him. A man of culture, an athlete, your dear son; all his work at Yale or Princeton—whether as the best student or as captain of team, or stroke of crew—all planned with reference to his magnificent mother. It is the sons of such mothers as you *might* be who make nations such as Venice once was, nations of poetry and romance as well as of material power."

"And my daughter, Cordelia," said Dorris naively, "what of her?"

The older woman smiled indulgently.

"She would be sought by the great ones of the earth, by dukes and princes, for there shall be nothing lowly in



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my proud Dorris's outlook,—and you have this to take or leave in contrast with short-lived happiness whose end shall be desolation and hate. And renunciation would make you tender, Dorris; your unconscious hardness would be melted in the glow of sympathy, for you have known the temptation and could look pityingly upon others' sorrows which you yourself perhaps narrowly missed—by going right! And, remember, it is the giving up that counts."

"How colossal your arguments might be if—if"—

"If what, girlie?"

"I do not know that I can express it just as I should like. I hear a voice inside me crying, 'Eat, drink; you live but once. Take what life offers. Do not spurn the gift. It is half divine. When you are an old woman, you will see what a waste your prudery has left.' It may be the voice of the devil, but it's loud. 'You are young. The dryads had their liberty. So have you. Love, love, love!'"

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### CHAPTER XXVII.

#### *Into the Night.*

"Am I writing to you, Paolo dear, or am I jotting down the wild thoughts that have come to me this night? I cannot say whether you are ever to read it or not. The spell of the awful night is over, its nerves and misery sped; and I think perhaps my youth is to end with the words on this paper—perhaps it has vanished already. Oh, where am I? Has it been a terrible dream? My watch—I will see what the hour is. Four o'clock in the morning after a night of struggle and hopeless yearning. I write as I feel now. What care I if this letter is so foolish that I can never send it to you? I will then keep it, and read it years later, when my hairs are white and my beauty gone. Has it gone now—the charm that lured you to win my love in such an unfair way? Well, you have won it, dearest. I love you, love you, love you—

What happened to-day? Oh! Paolo, to-day Bonti took me to the poison closet upstairs—What am I saying? Oh, yes! There was prussic acid there. Yes, and I saw Bencio open it. To-night—what did I do? Oh, Paolo—Cordelia showed me the path. Dear, wonderful Cordelia! Did she show me the true light, or was it merely what happened to-night? Yes, that was it—what happened to-night—that is it—Bonti left the key with me this morning. I went up in the dark—how long ago was that?—went up alone to open that dreadful closet of the

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Torni. You know, Paolo, my mother took prussic acid. It must have been her spirit calling me, for it was upon me—the madness. I cannot express myself as I would, for the excitement has been too great. Do not mind this rambling, impossible letter, for of course you are never to receive it. After I had sat and fought with my problem, the terror of it all seized me—gripped me, and for how long was it I was mad! The only things I saw were devils creeping near me, telling me what an easy release was in that prussic acid. Fancy, Paolo! the madness, the folly of it! Then my mother's voice was singing to me, telling me of the sweetness she now enjoyed. Death himself seemed hovering over me, wooing me with cruel caresses—caresses that promised much joy if I would but yield. If I would give myself to Death, he told me he would give me eternal love—the love I have unconsciously yearned for all my life. I understand my mother's temptation if his voice was so alluring and his kisses so sublime. You see I raved. Fancy, Paolo, being wooed by Death! Death! Death! That was it with my mother! He had her in his wonderful embrace. His embraces are even sweeter than yours—forgive me, if I say so—but he has left me now. And do you know why, Paolo, dear? After I had removed that dusty, spooky damask from the shelves up there and had touched the bottle—I seemed to see a light. What was it? A subconscious something in me I presume that was strong enough to win—yes, the light. What did it do? Why, it made me drop that exquisite bottle upon the floor—that bottle filled with deadly poison. It must have taken years to design it—it is a piece of work that is purely Italian, and that ought to please you, though I suppose you would laugh if you ever



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read this! You will not have the chance to laugh though—

One thing is true and I wish you knew it, Paolo. There is a God! Not the God of Wrath that dogma tells us of, but a God of Mercy and Love! Yes, a God of that great human frailty—Love!—else what was it that caused that light to shine? It was not the Devil, for he had been luring me to kill myself. Insanity, that was it—for a moment it had urged me to be a coward—to commit suicide! But I am whole again now—I am sane. The light came and told me my mission.

So I am sitting here at my writing table in an old Venetian gown that Bonti made me keep—it was in the chest upstairs. It is exquisite—perhaps you might really love me if you saw me in it—and a purple cloak—how you would love it, Paolo! But you will never see it.

And so, *amor mio*, my love story is over, and I have a long life to live, but it shall be a life that will make dear, dead Daddy happy, and I'm going to try with the help of the Light that shone to-night, to make Harry a good wife—and I love you—that is the wonder, the glory of it. God has sent me the weakness! I have not the strength to yield. God has shown me what real beauty means.

All my life, dearest, I shall think of you. I do not even hate you for what you have done! Nothing could make me hate you, Paolo. How I wish I could—but that would make renunciation too easy. That is not *His* way! It takes courage to be weak and courage to be strong—I have been such a selfish girl all my life, that I must pay the price by suffering now. You told me once we all paid a price for what was worth while! and it is worth while to be a good woman!

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## *The Strength to Yield*

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I wish you would think of me—only occasionally—but don't forget that night in the Colbrizzi garden, or at San Lazzaro, where I first began to feel my love for you.

Strangely enough I am not ashamed of myself. I am glad I went to your studio! and glad you have kissed me! There is nothing in the world like your kiss, Paolo, except the kiss of Death,—and that was madness!

There is one thing I fear; it is age! What will my old age think of my weakness? After all I have a right to live! Can I renounce? Have I the power?—Oh! it was only a soft breeze from the window that made me doubt my weakness. Who knows? Some day I may call it strength. Oh! That last ride of ours together—the twilight air kissing my face as I rushed through space! The strength of your tender arms as they checked my horse, and the warmth of your lips as they clung to mine! I shall never forget—never, never! And the day you were Leander in the Adriatic!

I wonder if it was propinquity that was the cause of my love for you, for Mr. Barker spoke to me of you in Greece, and seemed to foresee the coming event. As Cordelia also warned me, you were thrown in my path, and I thought more about you than I would have otherwise. Well what difference does it make to 'thee and me'? Doubtless I would have loved you, under any circumstances. Yet, Paolo, I am not sorry; it has opened my heart, and I shall always be thankful that I have known the great force of life.

How hopelessly, unendurably long the days will be, sweetheart, without your sympathy—even if it was a ruse while you were with me. I shall always dream of the

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## *The Strength to Yield*

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understanding you seemed to feel, and try to persuade myself it was genuine!

Finish that portrait of me, Paolo, please. Let it be the face of the woman who gave you her kisses, which she has only allowed her husband and you to enjoy—not the haughty girl you met at Lady Blanchard's dinner, and not like the sensuous Lady Cheltenham, but just Dorris Bedford—as you saw her in the garden here, or at your own palace. Perhaps you think me a fool for my course of action. Men like you might say it was inane, still you must respect me, when you realize the sacrifice I am making.

I am going to America—to the land where I was born, and I doubt if I shall ever see Italy again. Ah! how I have loved it! Strange that around it should cling the sweetest of memories, for my thoughts of it will ever be of my father and you! Perhaps if I am patient, I can make Harry over—make him a man like Daddy—even school him for the diplomatic service, and, Paolo, who knows but I will one day have the strength to sit beside you at a dinner table? Oh! all this talk about the future when the present is so hard to bear! I must leave this City Beautiful! How happy Cordelia will be when I step into her room in the morning and tell her I will take the steamer from Naples! Think of the love she bears for me! it makes up for your insincerity. Oh! why are the things enjoyable, so hopeless—so cruel—so overpowering!

How the Duchess whose gown I am wearing would laugh at me!—but I would tell her my temptation was merely the fire of Spring—yes *gioventu!* And mine is over. Oh! it is not years that count—it's the heart.



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## *The Strength to Yield*

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Mine grew old when I woke up to reality, and that was when my fingers pressed the bottle of poison. The nonsense of it—all for love. But Venice must needs add to her many tragedies, my own humble one—and how humble it is when I lay it at the ruins of this once great Republic. What difference can only one unhappy life make? The life of a foolish little American girl—buried till to-night in the tinsel of romance! And you knew it, so you played upon me.

It seems I will not allow myself a farewell—no! the last meeting shall remain as it does now—your ‘good-night,’ and your kiss on my fingers. *Addio, addio*, Paolo! there’s death in that sting. Oh! how my heart aches—how I want you, Paolo! How I shall always want you, for I love you—not as you loved me—yet I haven’t the strength to yield! I must leave for Naples to-morrow, or the deadly nerves might work havoc again. How they tore me and rent me and hurt me! They must have been part of my mother’s mania—and I hope I am released from it. I made a great effort with my will, and I won! Oh, the struggle of those midnight hours!—it was as if I were a soul in Hell in bitter torment. Was it only a few hours ago?

That mirror, Paolo! it frightens me! Look at my face! It is as changed as that of Dorian Grey, when he met his death. *Why* that sweet expression—I never saw it there before. How strange—it looks like *soul*! I know it was the Light! It was the Light! Oh, that I shall ever see it! I am going to try to write a farewell to Italy; the verses are coming to my lips. How wonderful—yes, it’s a good-bye I am saying from the steamer at Naples, with Vesuvius over there. Will I be able to

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## *The Strength to Yield*

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compose? Why, I have never tried—I must write as this poem enters my mind. What did I see in my face? Could it have been *Genius*? as a reward for not having the Strength to Yield? It is the Light! It brings the lines to my lips. How wonderful! Here they are, Paolo, dear, as they come to me!

For long I basked in thy dear smiles  
And felt with rapture, all thy guiles.  
    I breathed the scent of fabled pines;  
    My heart sought out thy crimson shrines.  
On waterways beneath thy moon  
I caught the pulsing singer's tune,  
    Land of beauty, land of love,  
    Italia, the flower of the world!

Here Vergil sleeps, his quiet grave  
A'haunt with spectres of the brave.  
    Here Horace lost his soul in verse;  
    The City flamed 'neath Nero's curse!  
The land of Ovid's loveless home,—  
The seven-storied hills of Rome.  
    Land of beauty, land of love,  
    Italia, the flower of the world!

Verona saw me at her grove,  
Where, lonely, sleeps the Slave of Love;  
    O where the roses ever bloom—  
    The land of Dante's exiled tomb!  
Where shrills the cicala's clear song,  
And lingers still Fra Lippi's wrong,  
    Land of beauty, land of love,  
    Italia, the flower of the world!

I saw the cell where Tasso spent  
His great-souled grief, his last lament.  
    The seat of dark Othello's rule—  
    The mystic, deep Cyrenian pool;  
The land where Adonais pondered,  
Singing soft lyrics as he wandered,  
    Land of beauty, land of love,  
    Italia, the flower of the world!

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## *The Strength to Yield*

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Here Faliero lingered long  
A'listening to Angela's song;  
Raphael died in beauty's arms;  
Here paled the gentle Cenci's charms;  
Cellini boasted 'neath those trees,  
Whose shades were cooled in Florence breeze.  
Land of beauty, land of love,  
Italia, the flower of the world!

Thou shrine of hearts and home of art,  
Grant me thy wisdom ere we part,  
The smile of sweet Corregio,  
The yearning of great Angelo!  
Endymion's perfect harmony,  
The tragic Prince of Poetry!  
Land of beauty, land of love,  
Italia, the flower of the world!

Now some harsh judgment of the North  
Drove Byron's glorious genius forth,  
To seek of thee his meed of praise,  
And sing thy most impassioned lays!  
He took thee to his soul sublime  
And made thee his beloved in rhyme,  
Land of beauty, land of love,  
Italia, the flower of the world!

I've loved thy fairy, petalled flowers,  
Each bird that wings thy fragrant bowers,  
Through leaf-lined ways Alfieri  
Has wandered with his Albany;  
And many a sign and symbol tell  
Of how the Brownings loved so well,  
Land of beauty, land of love,  
Italia, the flower of the world!

'Neath Santa Croce's dome I stood  
And revelled in Ravenna's wood!  
Yes, on thy happy shores I've dwelt,  
And on my lips thy kisses felt—  
A ruin thou, for eyes to-day,  
But faultless in thy dear decay!  
Land of beauty, land of love,  
Italia, the flower of the world!



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## *The Strength to Yield*

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But even tho' I lose thy smiles,  
And be a stranger to thine isles,  
    My knee will bow to worship yet,  
    My pen will rhyme its vain regret;  
Thy fame, to me a poem-book,  
Shall ever own my fervent look,  
    Land of beauty, land of love,  
    Italia, the flower of the world!

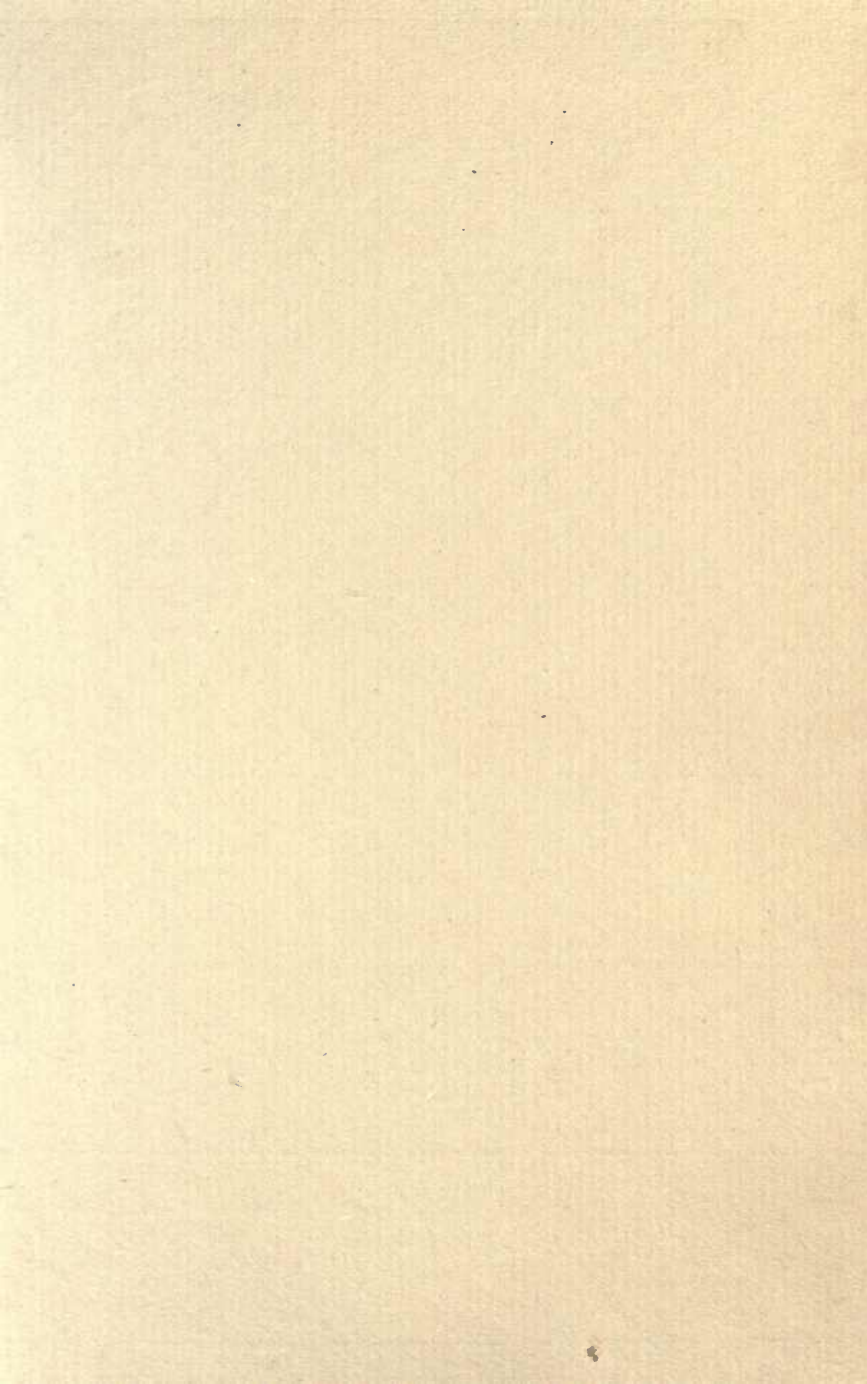
Again to tread thy world-worn ways?  
To breathe thine air, to live thy days?  
    Apollo's love were not more sweet!  
    I touch thy sands, they kiss my feet!  
Thy very weeds are fairest flowers,  
Thy wooded groves Elysian bowers.  
    Land of beauty, land of love,  
    Italia, the flower of the world!

Now comes the dreaded day, when I,  
With tender prayer, must say good-bye.  
    Wilt promise, promise me once more  
    To see thy lonely cypress shore?  
That in the din of daily strife,  
Thou'lt be an idyl in my life,  
    Land of beauty, land of love,  
    Italia, the flower of the world!

Oh, Paolo, dearest, let thy voice  
Make this, my aching heart, rejoice!  
    *Addio*, now, each cypress sings!  
    Ah, me! the dismal parting stings,  
And down yon peak the lava-flood  
Writes out the last farewell in blood!  
    Land of beauty, land of love,  
    Italia, the flower of the world!

*È 'finito!*









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